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HEAD OF THE VIRGIN: DETAIL FROM THE FRESCO BY PERUGINO
IN STA. MARIA MADDALENA DEI PAZZI, IN FLORENCE
(*Photo. Alinari*)

UMBRIA SANTA

By

Corrado Ricci

*

Translated by

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THE TRANSLATION IS DEDICATED TO THE

MEMORY OF ANOTHER

FRANCIS

WHO LOVED

BIRDS AND BEASTS AND FLOWERS

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

TO some readers, this translation may appear too literal, but I would have them remember that the book is that of a great Italian—writer, art critic, and historian—and I have endeavoured to keep as closely as possible to his thought and picturesque diction, even using the Historic Present more than is common in English.

My thanks are due to several friends for their help, and especially to Mr. John Marshall, without whose encouragement I should not have ventured on the translation.

For the quotations from the *Divina Commedia*, I have used Longfellow's Version, published by Messrs. Routledge.

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I. UMBRIA SANTA

UMBRIA SANTA

THE gifts of Italy to the world have seldom been adequately acknowledged, though there has been admiration, discussion, and, if we remember Dante and Columbus, even envy. Yet perhaps no other nation has done so much for civilization, since the day in which Rome gave to Humanity the rules of life which have been translated into eternal laws, laws whose light has never been extinguished, even in the Dark Ages, but has shone more brightly in each epoch of vigour and revival. In later days too, the gratitude of the human race is due to Gallileo Ferraris[1] who transmitted light and force, and to Guglielmo Marconi who gave to words, even to thoughts, free flight over land and water.

The whole of Italy joined in this great work of civilization, but it is interesting to see how each region developed its tendencies and maintained its characteristics, as though to assume its special mission in the complex design of elevating Humanity. Italy south of the Liri and the Tronto contributes to this solemn conclave the spirit of speculative thought; Latium juridical sense and justice; Tuscany fervent love of Art; the Marches equable temperament; Emilia the joy of poetical expression; Lombardy laborious austerity; Venice the vigorous union of mind and magnificence; Liguria commercial boldness; Piedmont political and military discipline. It must be understood

[1] Gallilco Ferraris, b. Leghorn 1847, d. Turin 1897. Scientist, worked specially at electricity and improvement of dioptric instruments.

that these special tendencies were not confined by arbitrary boundaries, but the prevailing feeling which gave character to the region and variety to the Nation, without disturbing its moral unity, helped to raise the great and complete work of its civilization to an unsurpassed splendour.

Art developed accordingly. Realistic research corresponded to Southern thought; Roman austerity and greatness found its expression in the noble works of Michael Angelo and of Raffael. Then in Florence we come to the sublime genius of Dante and of Leonardo; in Emilia the happy art of Ariosto, analogous to that of Correggio. In Venice, so full of opulent and heroic life, there is the wonder of Titian and of Paul Veronese. And what of Umbria? Umbria is the Holy Province—saintly its countenance, saintly its great men, saintly its art and its mission to the whole of Italy and to the World.

. . . . . .

We are in the early years of the sixth century, the barbaric invasions have laid desert the country and impoverished the people. The happiness and security of the individual family has disappeared. The dignity of life, of persons, of house, is left unprotected; civil ordinances confused and disregarded; books of ancient learning despised and neglected; the schools, reduced in number, existing only for the privileged few; the buildings of former religions suffered to fall into decay; the aqueducts dried and ruined. And amongst such squalor and misery of life, there appears a still more fearful darkness of conscience, a loss of every

ST. BENEDICT: DETAIL FROM THE FRESCO BY PERUGINO IN STA. MARIA MADDALENA DEI PAZZI, IN FLORENCE
(*Photo. Alinari*)

CHURCH OF SAN BENEDETTO AT NORCIA
(*Photo. Min. Istruzione*)

active ideal, a superabundance of leisure, a numbness of the best faculties; a terrible fall from greatness for a country till now in the forefront of civilization through the great power of Rome!

To arrest this ruin there appears an Umbrian of noble birth who had given himself to meditation and self-denial as a hermit in the Cave of Subiaco.

Treachery had made him leave Vicovaro for 'that mountain on whose slope Cassino stands', and it was the glory of Benedict to have been the first to carry there

> The name of Him who brought upon the earth
> The truth that so much sublimateth us,

and to have drawn the surrounding towns

> From the impious worship that seduced the world.

But for us his glory is of another sort.

Oriental monasticism (saving the Basilians), even when free from vanity and imposture, was exclusively contemplative. Every life of asceticism could be considered complete in itself. Each monastery, each cell, so asserts Cassianus, had a different rule. From them issued heroes of useless self-mortification but not of civil reconstruction. To approach heaven, they felt it necessary to abandon humanity; thus they gave no man counsel, offered no man charity, and saved no man by their example.

Even the most learned, thinking by their writings to steep themselves in the mysteries of God, left the earth to

its sins and its terrors. To them it seemed that the Divine Power manifested itself better in a sterile solitude than in the fruitful activity of life, and therefore they condemned life and eulogized death!

Benedict repudiated these insane ideas, as also he disapproved of the Roman clergy, who adhered too much to earth and its pleasures by their dissolute and egoistic lives.

His brain, his heart, his character held our country on the slope whence she was on the brink of ruin, and in this way his influence was for the good of humanity. And he did this in one of the crises of the world's history (that in which Christianity succeeded to Paganism), struggling to save whatever was best and noblest in the ancient learning without sacrificing it to the blind faith of fanaticism.

By his labours he awakened study, art, agriculture. As the custodian and propagator of civilization in the days in which it lay in peril, he has no equal in the world. From every seed which he sowed grew not one tree, but a forest! The monasteries that he founded, from one became a thousand, not silent hermitages, but busy centres of activity, both manual and intellectual, round which all trades congregated. For this reason men thirsting for peace, anxious for work, longing for material welfare, flocked round, and houses were built,—became villages, and villages developed into towns.

. . . . . .

The Rule of Benedict orders his disciples to cultivate the ground, to promote learning, to enlarge the mind; and be-

cause the Rule insists on Writing, it creates a number of painters of miniatures and of copyists of manuscripts,—both sacred and profane,—who transcribe and illuminate ancient works, thus preserving for us many treasures of art, both of writing and of painting. And when the Renaissance will awaken both mind and spirit, and when Humanists and the early Printers seek for books to study and publish them, it is to the Benedictine monasteries that they will turn. Again, the Rule orders Reading and this is developed through the works slowly collected and transcribed; from Reading it is but natural to pass to Teaching, from the monastic Stall to the professorial Chair, seed of the future University. Every Monastery is a school, from which issue theologians, essayists, chroniclers, some of whom are known to fame as great Pontiffs. With his marvellous genius St. Benedict comprehends that it is necessary to inculcate actions, and then leave them free to manifest themselves unfettered. Therefore his Rule does not say 'Drain the marsh, plough the fields, deepen the canals, tend the forests'. He merely says, 'Work the land, render it fertile and productive', consequently, the ploughing and draining follow. Each disciple thus has the joy of using his own talent, and does not realize that he is obeying the will of the Saint.

Neither does he order his monks to transcribe Virgil or the Bible, Augustine or Cicero: all he says is that each day they should pass from Reading to Writing. Each monk will copy what he wishes. He will be free and at the same

time obedient: the eternal rule of civilization, the foundation of every healthy State. The multiplicity of works chosen will be instrumental in saving an intellectual patrimony, and thus connect ancient and modern learning.

. . . . . .

The work of the Benedictines continues to advance with vigilance and dignity, widening its sphere with good works, and bringing new arts to life. Music is the budding flower which rises amongst the slender columns of the cloister.

Guido Monaco[1] establishes the theory of music and after giving names to the notes, he teaches his companions in the abbey of Pomposa the musical scale, and a new method of singing which, beginning in the silent Paduan valleys, wending its way through North Italy, soon reaches Cluny, where Abelard, torn from the loving arms of Héloïse, comes to a peaceful haven in those of the Abbot Peter.

But the outside world is agitated and tumultuous. The Communes have won Liberty but not Peace. The Crusades have reänimated Christian heroism but have also awakened a lively desire for adventure with its consequent corruption, a thirst for dominion with its consequent ferocity. Between the cities there are sanguinary conflicts, while within them, notwithstanding a newly awakened love of life and beauty, there is persistent feudal fighting. And behold, once more in Umbria, arises the mystic saint who opposes humility to boastfulness, poverty to the vaunting of riches, love to

[1] Guido Monaco, commonly called Guido d'Arezzo, 995–1050.

THE CATHEDRAL OF SPOLETO
(*Photo. Alinari*)

CHURCH OF THE CONSOLAZIONE TODI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

hate; love not for man alone, but for everything in Nature; that love of all, which although losing its natal purity, was the precursor of the Renaissance.

He laments the horror of war, the crimes of the people, the violence of the great, the corruption of the clergy; does not fear the taint of heretic, for like Dante, he feels in his soul the firm and life-giving faith of a Christian.

In opposition to simony, usury, and the carnal pleasures to which the clergy are addicted, he insists on the complete renunciation of all worldly goods, and his fruitful work saves the Church from being torn in pieces by the rebellions and heresies rampant in many parts of Europe.

And all this, not amid the sadness of a lamenting and inert asceticism, but in a life of joyful poverty, uniting happiness and charity with work, to reach which it is necessary to follow his example and cast away the tyranny of temporal riches.

Riches for him are to be found in everything around; in the air, in the sun, in water, in fire, in the woods, in flowers.

. . . . . .

The need that ancient learning should not perish, drew round St. Benedict hundreds of elect spirits: the need that vanity, cruelty, excess should not triumph, drew round St. Francis hundreds of simple souls. And his word had so vast a moral effect, an influence so revolutionary, that even he himself did not realize it.

It is written in the *Fioretti* that 'He preached so marvellously that it seemed as though it were an angel rather than

a man, and his words were like celestial arrows piercing the hearts of those who heard them'.

And there in Holy Umbria, he had his being, his apostles; there developed the most wonderful part of his life, and there he died, blessing his beloved Assisi, so that all parts breathe forth his spirit, from the humble Porziuncola to the wooded Carcere and the caves of the Subasio; from the islands of the melancholy lake to the hills of Rieti; from the gorge of the Nera to the sunlit knoll of Fonte Colombo; from the bare defile of Poggio Bustone to 'the hill elect of blessed Ubald'.

Everything seems filled with peace in this enchanting Umbria! Holy is the silence of its lakes, islands, pastures; holy the quietude of its rocks and forests; holy the little towns with houses rising on the hill towards the church, like sheep at the call of the shepherd, like the godly at the prayer of the pastor.

In the larger cities Art and Faith tend to obliterate the remembrance of the discord and signs of violence which persist in the grim fortresses of the feudal lords:

Assisi with its triple temple in which Giotto depicts the life drama of Francis; Spoleto with its cathedral, where Fra Filippo, while celebrating the vision of the Virgin, closes his eyes in death; Perugia with the story of Bernardino of Siena woven in the delicate marble tracery of the sculpture of Agostino; Todi where the marbles in the church of the Consolation seem like a sacred song; Orvieto, the golden pinnacles of whose cathedral are seen flaming against the

mountain background: an altar shining for ever with the Divine Blood of the miracle of Bolsena.

From this humble, prayerful Umbria came forth great minds of classic tendencies, whose imagination and skill would have transformed the art of their country, had their steps not turned where their work was more needed, as that of Piermarini in the stately city of Milan, or Galeazzo Alessi in Genoa the proud!

. . . . . .

In that marvellous and enchanted land, we feel the anger and turmoil of souls is soothed when contrasted with the splendour of fantasy and the hopes and delusions of real life. Dante, who invests with his wrath cities and citizens of so many parts of Italy, contemplates with adoration Assisi between its hills and its streams.

> Therefore let him who speaketh of that place,
> Say not Ascesi, for he would say little,
> But Orient, would he name it right.

There, amid vain dreams of liberty and love, the disdainful soul of Byron finds calm, there the unhappy poet of Recanati rejoices in seeing the beauty of Trevi with its aërial roofs, and there the bard of New Italy launches forth his love song.

The story of Umbria has, however, frightful pages of fraternal strife, of furious wars: it has fierce stories of 'Captains of Adventure', but the saintly troubadour encourages her people at the same time as the forceful

oratory of Simone of Cascia heartens her; and Tragedy sleeps!

Listen to the terrifying story of the Baglioni. Atalanta, worthy to be compared with Hecuba for the depth of her sorrow, widowed at the age of twenty, thrusts from her, in her incomparable beauty, all flattery of heart and senses,—wishing to devote herself wholly to her son Grifone. But he is little different from the rest of his family; and one night black with horror, he becomes infuriated with passion against his own people. However, returning to his mother when stained with blood, she sends him from her with such frightful maledictions, 'that it would seem as though the earth would swallow the youth'.

Such is the account of Matarazzo, the chronicler from Perugia, who can write pages sweet enough to describe the glories of Fra Angelico and others powerful enough to vie with the *Novissimi* of Luca Signorelli. But when Grifone lies wounded and dying, she goes amongst the tumult and the fighting: 'Then her son' (it is the chronicler speaking) 'fixes his eyes on his mother, and his mother, good and wise, abstains from her bitter weeping, comforting and exhorting her dear son to pardon those who had done him to death, and begging him to make a sign of forgiveness. Then the noble youth puts his right hand in that of his youthful mother, pressing her white hand and immediately the soul passes from the beautiful body with the blessings and not the curses of his mother.'

Ah! that word mother (*matre*), so often repeated in the

JACOPONE DA TODI: FROM A PAINTING OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY ATTRIBUTED TO DOMENICO VENEZIANO, IN THE CATHEDRAL OF PRATO (*Photo. Alinari*)

THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS: FROM A PAINTING BY RAFFAEL, IN THE BORGHESE GALLERY, ROME
(*Photo. Alinari*)

rhythm of a simple prose, seems like a palpitation of the heart!

But who invisibly supported Atalanta we must realize are the sisters of the two great Umbrians, St. Benedict and St. Francis, Scholastica the real sister of Benedict, and Clare the spiritual one of Francis; and it was the spirit of this latter saint that joined the pallid hands of mother and son, as he had before this appeared to comfort the dying bed of Guido of Montefeltro.

Atalanta, enfolded in the blackest grief, appeals to the art of Raffael to express her anguish in Christian Tragedy, but her sorrow is beyond representation.

. . . . . .

Thus Art is suffused with religious goodness and gentleness. We have not yet arrived at the moment in which it becomes mystic and the Umbrian masters work under the influence of the Sienese, but as regards Umbrian painting it manifests its own qualities and knowledge, discovering its character in the Blessed Angelico and in Benozzo; and soon after them we see Nicolo di Liberatore, called l'Alunno, a contrast to Carlo Crivelli who was working in the neighbouring Province of the Marches. Thus although having a superficial resemblance, the Venetian being imbued with a decorative art of gorgeous stuffs, of jewels, of marbles, of coloured glass, thinks little or nothing of expression; whilst the other, born in Central Umbria, filled with pious mysticism and Franciscan simplicity, attaches no influence to external luxury, but adds the charm of landscape, because

the country which he depicts has the spirit so closely allied to enchantment of the soul.

But the marvel is that the religious sentiment of Umbrian painting grows simultaneously with the Pagan influence in other parts of Italy, in art, literature, and life as a whole, and when this culminates, the religious feeling begins to decline.

Architects obey the Vitruvian canons, and copy ancient buildings; painters and sculptors fill their studios with Greek and Roman statues and with sketches in chalk. Ancient and mythological stories are always to the fore as subjects for Art, desired just as much by Cardinals and even by Popes, as by the temporal princes, such as the Gonzaga, Bentivoglio, Feltreschi, the Este and the Medici. Art in most parts of Italy is already classified in *form* while the painters Bonfigli, Mesastris, l'Alunno, Melanzio, Caporali, Matteo da Gualdo are working in Umbria; it is already established in *form* and in *subject* in the works of Perugino, Pintoricchio, Giovanni di Spagna, Fiorenzo di Lorenzo. It is settled in *form*, *subject* and in *feeling* when the disciples discard the remaining memory of their evanescent prayer and depict the last figures of their visions of art delicate and diaphanous as Diana of Foligno, in whose transparent throat, says the chronicler, one could see the red wine descending as she drank!

. . . . . .

The hero of religious painting is therefore Umbrian. Born in the ruddy-towered Città della Pieve, he betakes

himself to Perugia to be in the heart of Umbria where the actual essence of religion is centred. There he is able to gather elements of artistic passion from the great Pier della Francesca, afterwards descending to Florence where Art is both Science and Poetry. But he is always the pilgrim and the apostle of religious art. He will be moved by the terrible prophecies of Savonarola against the moral and artistic errors of society, but he will be the only artist to feel himself immune from the threats and anathemas of the ardent monk.

In the school of Verrocchio, companion of Leonardo and of Lorenzo di Credi, he will learn what is necessary for his work of technical and formal values, but he will cede nothing of his own feeling; he will leave to the Madonna of Leonardo the smile, to her of Lorenzo the placid goodness, for he would that the Virgin he depicts should be 'humble and high beyond all other creature'; thus he will exercise a softening influence on the somewhat severe gravity and temper the realism of the Florentine school.

The harmonic force of colour, the calm of composition, the delicacy of the attitudes, the innocence, tenderness, resignation of the faces; the simple yet wise perspective, the vast silence of his landscapes below skies of dawn or of sunset, will not be without their effect in the half-pagan atmosphere now spread over most of Italy. It will be sufficient for some painting of his to be shown in a village to awaken vibrations of sweetness and of peace. The pictures painted for Pavia and Cremona will not be without

influence on Lombard art, nor the one for Bologna without impression on Francia and his fellow Emilians, and the benefit of other works will pervade the distant provinces of Romagna, the Marches, and Latium, diffusing everywhere a sense of serene calm and of growing devotion.

And even when far on in the years, he will see the young men desert his studio, and will hear Michael Angelo proclaim his manner 'absurd and antiquated', and in the Vatican he will vacate his post in favour of his great disciple; even he himself will acknowledge that his imagination has vanished, his design weakened, the talent of his drawing and colouring has diminished; even then the splendour of his youthful works will continue to exercise a beneficent effect on such artists as Raffael, and Bartolomeo della Porta; specially on the former, who drew from Perugino his divine simplicity and that incomparable tender sweetness which saved him from being overcome by the power and boastfulness of Michael Angelo, and enabled him to complete such masterpieces of spirituality as the 'Disputa del Sacramento' and the 'Miracolo di Bolsena'.

Another artist to benefit by the teaching of Perugino will be Pintoricchio, who although led by his temperament to a decorative style without equal, will never forget the tranquil goodness he had learned in the capital of his country. But there was too much cruelty in the hearts of his patrons for the gentle beauty of his saints to evoke the spirit of tenderness and resignation. Thus those of the Vatican were without effect on the bloody proposals and meditated

MADONNA AND SAINTS: FROM A PAINTING BY MATTEO DA GUALDO, IN THE PICTURE GALLERY OF GUALDO TADINO
(*Photo. Arti Grafiche di Bergamo*)

ST. FRANCIS KISSING THE FEET OF THE CRUCIFIED: FROM A PAINTING BY NICOLO DI LIBERATORE DA FOLIGNO, CALLED L'ALUNNO, IN THE MUSEUM OF TERNI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

treachery of the Borgias, as the sweet saints of Lo Spagna awoke no sense of moderation and decorum at the immoral gatherings of the Magliana.

And now a humble religious feeling permeates the land. When Perugino died of the plague in Fontignano, Correggio had already begun his work in the Convent of San Paolo of Parma; painting there in the room of the Abbess, Diana hunting with a leash of hounds and a galaxy of cherubs; Adonis, Juno and the Muses with the Graces and Fortune!

Paganism was triumphing, but once again Umbria was fighting for Christian holiness!

. . . . . .

This is the glory of Umbria—this her unique place in Italian civilization.

In the early Middle Ages she saves the ancient learning through St. Benedict and diffuses rules of life, of work, of culture, of human dignity. In the period of fratricidal strife and of the basest corruption, St. Francis soothes the souls with piety, with poverty, with sacrifice; and when later, Italian art seems to lose every true expression of Christian faith, Perugino welds together the power of his land (the faculty of religious mystery dating from the Etruscan era) and almost repeating the words of St. Francis in his pictures he counsels simplicity, goodness and tenderness.

The poet of our own day has thus addressed this land: 'Hail, verdant Umbria!' But Umbria, in her great and varied beauty, in the continuous alternations of fertile plain

and solitary gorge; of mountains, some deeply wooded, others sterile and open, of waters now in rivers, now lakes, now cascades; of rocks arid and bare, may contend with other provinces of Italy for the simple attribute of colour.

But none other can deny her that divine and spiritual title of Holy.

Hail, Holy Umbria!

II. THE FRANCISCAN LANDSCAPE

THE CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI AND PALAZZO DEI CONSOLI, GUBBIO (*Photo. Alinari*)

LE CARCERI, NEAR ASSISI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

THE FRANCISCAN LANDSCAPE

FOR the right understanding of a great man's mind, it is profitable for us to know the country of his choice; for few things can so truly reveal his feelings as the harmony existing between his innate thoughts, his life and his natural surroundings.

It is a commonplace that anxious and unquiet souls disdain the country, as the simple do the town, and one may well believe that the praise of rural life, so often sung by the poets, is not all rhetoric! The passion of Garibaldi for the rock of Caprera and that of Verdi for the villa of Sant' Agata, are equally significant with the hatred for solitude displayed by Giovanni della Banda Nera and by Napoleon. However this may be, it is certain that hardly ever has there existed between Nature and the heart of man such loving comprehension as between the soul of St. Francis and things material. Dante understands it when he lingers over the description of the country where the learned friar was born and died. His biographers comprehend it, when they repeat continually that he ever sought quiet retreats and the barren wilderness for his prayers. His choice of abiding-places among the wild animals gives rise to the sweet legend of affection between them and the saint. Francis converts to piety the ferocious wolf who did 'great harm' in the neighbourhood of Gubbio, 'spoiling and killing God's creatures without His permission'. Francis calls him 'Brother Wolf', and confidently asks him to refrain from more ravages. 'And the

wolf, with an inclination of the head, makes a clear sign that he promises' and puts a paw into the hand of the Saint, who leads him, 'like a gentle lamb', into the city, where afterwards the wolf lives in concord with the citizens and 'dies of old age to the sorrow of every one'.

Then St. Francis entertains the wild doves 'which made themselves at home with him and the other Brothers, as if they had been domestic hens always fed by them, and never went away, until St. Francis gave them permission with his benediction'. Again on the road to Bevagna, he preaches to the birds in a field. 'And immediately those in the trees come to him, and all together they wait while St. Francis finishes his sermon, which is a hymn full of poetry:' 'Ye birds, my sisters, you are very precious to God your Creator, and always in every place you ought to praise Him, because He has given you liberty to fly everywhere; He has also given you clothing, two- and threefold; also because He kept your forebears in the Ark of Noah; so that your numbers might never diminish on the earth; still more does He think of you in decreeing for you the element of air in which you have your being. Beyond this, you neither sow nor reap, and God feeds you and gives you to drink from rivers and springs, and gives you mountains and valleys for your refuge, and the high trees for your nests; and although you know neither how to spin nor to sew, God clothes you and your little ones. Thus the Creator loves you and confers His benefits upon you; therefore beware, my sisters, of the sin of ingratitude, but

devote yourselves always to praising God.'—Whilst St. Francis was saying these words 'all the birds began to open their beaks, to expand their throats, to flutter their wings, and reverently to incline their heads even to the ground, thus with act and song showing that the words of the Saint gave them great delight.'

There are similar stories about other places. Wadding recounts that while the Saint was praying in a cell of the Villa of Verruchio, there arose such a clamour of little birds in the neighbouring trees, that he besought them to be still, which they were at once; indeed, retreating in silence, they returned no more. A still greater concourse of birds crowded round him when with three companions, he ascended for the first time, the mountain of La Verna, and at a few steps from the 'rude rock' where the path turned, he stopped to rest beneath an oak; 'and behold there arrived a multitude of birds from many districts, and with their song and fluttering of wings, showed their pleasure and surrounded St. Francis in such a way that some perched upon his head, some on his shoulders, others on his arms, his knees and round his feet'. Seeing this, Francis, content in spirit, spake thus: 'Dear Brethren, I think that our Saviour Jesus Christ has pleasure that we should inhabit this solitary mountain, because our arrival gives such joyousness to our brothers and sisters the birds'.

And it was not a vision of angels with which legend has graced the humble spot where the Saint died on October 4, 1226, but a miraculous flight of larks singing in joyful

exhilaration, now rising, now descending, and fluttering round the rough roof of straw, again reäscending into space and singing as though to celebrate the glory of the dying Saint. And together all faded away, the daylight, the song of the birds and the life of the holy man.

But even if one calls this 'legend', who would deny that it illustrates truth? Is not legend often the flower which springs from the plant of reality? Who has not seen animals, when sure of safety and treated with kindness, become trusting and confident? In a sad mental hospital I myself have seen the sparrows alight on the knees of the unhappy patients who have shown them tenderness! And was not Francis, with his inexhaustible goodness, with his infinite gentleness, the one who could most easily dissipate the wild diffidence of animals? Let me recall what Vasari wrote of Raffael—'The goodness of his nature was so full of gentleness overflowing with love, that not only was he honoured by men, but even by the very animals, who would constantly follow his steps and always loved him.'

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Furthermore, the wide sympathy of Francis with Nature manifests itself intensely in the Canticle of the Sun, the highest prayer of a devotional soul. Here is not exaltation of saints, not invocation of pardon, not aspiration to martyrdom, not longing for the happiness of the world to come, but the Praise of God because He has created the divine and incorruptible beauty of the sky, the sun, moon, stars; the phenomena of the air, wind, clouds, stillness; the mar-

vels of the earth, such as water, fire, plants, fruit and flowers; the course of life with its joys, its sorrows and the mystery of death. And all he hails with the tender name of Brother or Sister, and for everything he finds an adjective of incomparable beauty. The stars are 'precious as gems', water is 'humble and pure', fire is 'jocund, robust and strong'.

Thus one must praise and bless God for everything: even for sorrow, even for death.

And he wished that the touching prayer, the joyful hymn to creation, should be sung, for he loved singing and music. Coming forth from the tribunal of the diocese of Assisi, absolutely poor, he hides himself in a dark forest of the Mount Subasio, singing in French the praise of God with his strong, clear, sonorous voice, a contrast to the frailty of his body. He still sings after thieves have despoiled him and left him naked on the snow; and he is still singing when he goes on a pilgrimage to the Marches. But listen to the account of Brother Leo (whom Francis calls Brother Pecorella), 'Sometimes, inebriated with love and compassion towards Christ, he did curious things as if a melodious spirit were burning within him, often manifesting itself externally in singing in the French tongue, and the richness of the divine breath that his ear received, expressed itself without his ever perceiving it, in a French Jubilee. At times he picked up a stick from the ground and raising it to his left arm and taking another in his right hand, he made as if to play the viol or other instrument, and accompanying

this sound with movements of his person, he chanted in French the glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ.'

And thus he ordered that his brethren should sing, specially when he felt himself assailed by the spasms of his atrocious suffering. Then they sang loud and long, day and night, so much that Brother Elias became troubled by it and tried to dissuade St. Francis, who answered him, 'Let me be, Brother, for I am rejoicing in the Lord and in His praises and in mine infirmity.' And even when he was at the point of death, he besought two Brothers to sing the praise of God, and raising his voice as far as he was able, he murmured the psalm, 'Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi'. And after his death, the Brothers, humble and obedient, continued to chant psalms all night long, round his body.

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The passion of St. Francis was for Solitude, not that of bare plains and deserts, but of the woods full of the rustling leaves, of the singing of birds, of the murmur of streams and bubbling of springs. And even if he were sheltered between rocks, he was always under the shade of a great tree, or in a grove of saplings, or under the hanging branches of ivy or honeysuckle. It seemed as though he himself were a lyric emanation of Nature, born of harmony of things and essence of flowers. His spirit was light and was song, was reality, and was a dream. The fascination that he has always exercised on men has been essentially poetical. Jesus was infinitely greater; His thought more

profound, His life more tragic, His influence more vast; nevertheless, Jesus was as intimately connected with the spirit of Nature as was the Poor Man of Assisi, who was in perfect accord with the humblest or highest expression of things celebrated by him in the Canticle of the Sun. His goodness was simple and lasting as the goodness of bread and water, never-ending. He had a passion for sacrifice and for charity; pity for all suffering. For this reason, he desired to remain where the need was greatest. For in contrast to the saints who were before him, he did not wish to absent himself from his own town, which, not yet realizing his moral greatness, treated him as a madman, laughed at him and threw stones at him, while his father, the opulent merchant, agreed with his enemies in abusing him.

Giacomo Leopardi vindicates himself on his co-citizens by calling them 'vile and rough people', and the town, 'his native, savage birthplace'. But St. Francis on the contrary felt his love for Assisi grow at every new outrage, and never lost the feeling of grief on leaving his home, each time he had to go far away for the welfare of the Christian faith or for the good of the religious order he had founded. St. Benedict, on the contrary, had quitted Norcia for the solitude of Subiaco and Monte Cassino; St. Peter Damian had left Ravenna for the hermitage of Camaldoli and for Catria; places as it seemed to them nearer to God, but remote, far from their country, from the homes where, having passed their early life in the usual

manner of other young men, they felt tied to earth and its troubles. Their first thought on giving themselves to God, was to detach themselves from their families, relations and friends; it was necessary to break every terrestrial link, one might say to crush human affection. But this was not the idea of St. Francis, who preferred to remain in the place where he had led a dissipated life, not far from his friends of those days, so that his repentance should be more heartfelt, for the edification of those same companions. His victory was a still greater one, because inspired by his conversion, it was not only those wearing the humble tunic, and the women following Clare in her precepts of prayer and poverty, who began to lead a new life, but nearly all Assisi gradually imitated his example, and grew to love and admire him. So much so, that towards the end of his life, when he was far from home, the inhabitants of Assisi sent many times to persuade him to come back there, anxious that his last days should be passed among them. But he wished to die near his beloved Porziuncola, whence he had so often raised his eyes to his native city on the hill of Subasio, and had blessed it with prayer and canticle; just as he did at the end from the little Hospital, even after his eyes could see no longer. And immediately after his death, the whole population of Assisi and the neighbouring villages turned their steps to the humble cell, crowding the roads and paths weeping and singing litanies.

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STORIES OF ST. FRANCIS, WITH THE VIEW OF MOUNT SUBASIO: FRESCO BY BENOZZO, IN SAN FRANCESCO DI MONTEFALCO

ASSISI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

St. Francis travelled much, especially after the Pope had ordered him and his followers not to separate themselves from the world, but to remain in its midst, and to counsel and guide the people by word and example, and help them in their spiritual needs; but it would be well to distinguish between the places which he visited in this way as his duty, and those he chose for his life of prayer and meditation. In the same way St. Romualdo went to Spain and even to Russia to establish monasteries, but his real abode was the hermitage of Camaldoli, which he founded in the densest and highest forest of the Casentino. St. Peter Damian also took diplomatic journeys abroad and spent days and months in Rome and in other great cities, but his life of silence and of contemplation revolved round the remote district of Catria. Thus the necessities of the order and preaching lead Francis, a great walker, into infinitely long journeys. He is several times in Rome to see the Popes Innocent III and Honorius III. He goes into the Campagna; we find him in many parts of Tuscany, at Siena, Sarteano, Florence, at Chiusi, Cetona, Borgo San Sepolcro; in Romagna, at San Leo, Rimini, Imola, and Bologna; in the Marches at Ancona, Osimo, San Severino; in Venetia, at Venice and Verona, and then far away from Italy, in France, Spain, Slavonia, in Egypt, in Palestine. And who can say in how many other places, even in Italy, he has been? How many of our villages has he visited, in how many of our towns has he sojourned and preached? From

the uncontrollable desire to bring peace to tumultuous hearts (and there were many such in those days), from the ardent wish to shower upon all the warmth of his goodness and his love, he felt himself urged to increase the number of adherents to his sacred cause, and to teach peace. Even when, overcome by illness, his feeble body weakened, bowed by the Stigmata, he can hardly hold himself erect on his tired feet, we see him dragging round from village to hamlet, to fulfil his marvellous work of love. Behold him, extremely ill, and almost blind at Monte Casale, then at Rieti, after that at Bagnara di Nocera and at Cortona.

Now to all these places, he goes for the needs of religion, or sometimes toward the end, in search of doctors to cure his bodily suffering, but not because these are the chosen of his spirit. It is not here that we must search for the Franciscan Landscape, for these are only transitory resting-places like Foligno, Gubbio and even Greccio, where he first instituted The Crib for the Feast of Christmas.

The spots most near to the heart of Francis, where his spirit seemed to touch God, where he lived his life of faith and religion to its most mysterious depth, were Assisi with the neighbouring caves and woods of the Subasio, Rivotorto and the Porziuncola; an island in Lake Trasimene, and La Verna.

One must not imagine that the present aspect of these places in any way resembles what St. Francis saw. The

cult of the faithful has, especially in pomp-loving centuries, transformed too many humble things Franciscan, adding to some and destroying others. Certainly seen from afar, Assisi, with its golden woods against the dark background of Subasio, is the same as ever, but its western outline is changed by the outstanding Fortress and the great Basilica and Convent rising on the powerful arcades; and there grew up gradually not only this dark mass of buildings with the church of the Saint, but also a long series of palaces, houses, hovels spreading and degenerating as time went on, till they now cover parts of the walls and one gate of the city. Do not therefore believe those who say that Assisi is more or less as St. Francis saw it. It is both more beautiful and more ugly: the former because of that which has come from the devotion to the Saint and of its development especially in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: the latter on account of the vulgarity of modern and speculative building. When St. Francis was born, there were still remains of the Temple of Minerva, the Amphitheatre and the Theatre although partially demolished, part of the Forum and the Walls. Of mediæval building, the cathedral was prominent, with the rich ornamentation on the portals which we still admire, but not yet the loggia and the rose-windows. There were a few of the minor churches and the episcopal palace, but none of them in their present form. And all around clustered humble huts made of straw and wood, while to the west stood out that Hill of Darkness, which in

grace of the building of the great basilica, became the Hill of Light. Naturally there did not exist the church of the Saint, nor that of Sta. Chiara and the Monte Frumentario. The palaces of the Consols and of the Priors were not completed till after the death of St. Francis, and about the same time as the façade of San Pietro, the church of San Lorenzo and the strong fortress overlooking the city. I will not continue this list, but will only say that it was owing to her great son that the city developed so rapidly, particularly in art, and so acquired a world-wide fame. But then the admirers of the Saint did everything to honour his memory, whilst to-day they think too much of the material advantage they can derive from his sanctity and the celebrity of the place.

However, one thing that has not changed is the beauty of the landscape: the vast plain below encircled by hills, with towns and villages and castles at every turn of the road, at every descent of a lane, through arches, or above churches and houses; there is a continual variety of views; or of mountains, or of the level plain which extends round Sta. Maria degli Angeli. Thus Assisi on its height, contemplated by so many eyes, seems verily an altar, or the worthy cradle of a holy, light-giving spirit absorbed in the thought of heaven.

If to-day we had in their original aspect the places in which St. Francis lived, it would be our jealous and rigorous care so to keep and preserve them. But on the contrary until quite recently, it was thought that

SAN DAMIANO, NEAR ASSISI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

THE LITTLE CHOIR OF SANTA CHIARA, IN SAN DAMIANO
(*Photo. Alinari*)

veneration for the saint should manifest itself in showing forth how poor he was, whilst as a matter of fact, this leads us away from his spirit and story. Fortunately, some places have been preserved almost in their primal condition, their moving simplicity, or maybe in their natural grandeur; the vanity of man not being able to transform the rocks, nor their avidity to use the axe, as has been done in the forests of Camaldoli and of Vallombrosa.

For instance, humble is the church with the convent of San Damiano a few steps from Assisi, majestic is the forest which fringes the hermitage of the Carcere.

San Damiano, with its rough choir, the lectern resembling a pigeon-cote, from the bare refectory and the narrow oratory of Sta. Chiara, from the little terrace whence one contemplates such a wide horizon, seems in its poetic poverty to reveal the spirit of the saint. The church, on the contrary, small and modest, disturbs us by the debris of every age, and by its altar of false gothic.

San Damiano played a great part in the life of Francis, and in that little quiet place, we may well remember the saintliness of his life.

In the early hours of his hesitancy, he often went there to meditate; there from the crucifix which was afterwards transferred to Sta. Chiara, he heard the warning which determined his conversion. He wished to restore the little church with the money obtained by selling his rich clothes and his horse, and because the priest would not accept this offering, he threw it out of the window! He

remained there a long time with the austere priest, returned there in the spring of 1206, and clothing himself as a hermit, with cord and sandals, he entered Assisi to beg alms for the restoration of his beloved chapel. 'Many turned him away, thinking him mad, but others took pity, felt themselves moved even to tears, seeing him so quickly changed from the lasciviousness and vanity of the world, to the inebriation of divine love' as to carry stones on his shoulders, and in many ways afflict himself in the service of God. And he begged for oil to keep alight the lamps. And it was there that he sent Chiara Scifi with her companions who had entered into a life of prayer and penitence, thus founding the order of Sisters, known to us as Poor Clares; there once more was it that, while resting on his way to Rieti for the cure of his eyes, he composed part of the magnificent Canticle of the Sun. Therefore after the death of the Saint, the funeral procession from the Porziuncola to Assisi, passed through San Damiano, leaving the body there for a time, so that Sta. Chiara, ill in body and mind, might kiss the hands and feet of her spiritual brother.

But the humbleness that can be found at San Damiano no longer exists at Rivo Torto or at Sta. Maria degli Angeli. The site of the little hut at Rivo Torto in which Francis and his companions hid themselves, is no longer certain, but a hideous church was built near there in 1853, an imitation of the cathedral at Assisi; and over the Porziuncola, a tardy and pompous devotion has raised a temple

crowned with a great cupola, the architects of which (Vignola and Alessi) wisely kept to their own style, even though that is hardly suitable to the humble spot.

In fact there no longer exists the true Franciscan fascination of the famous place, once so dear to the heart of the Saint and where so many great episodes of his life took place. There is no longer the lovely forest where he lost himself in the highest exaltation of prayer; but instead, the tiny church of the Porziuncola is covered with academic pictures by Overbeck, and the cell where St. Francis died is transformed into a chapel and decorated within by Lo Spagna, and without by more modern artists. True it is that the church has in itself elements of grandeur and is not wanting in works of art, but the Spirit of the Poor Man is not there; it might be the church of any other saint in any other country of the world, just as the pilgrimages which meet there, and the conferences held, are without any special character. Now read in the *Fioretti* the description of the marvellous chapter held by St. Francis in Sta. Maria degli Angeli, with over 5,000 brothers: 'These spread themselves over the ground between the forest and the Porziuncola, and prayed and said the Office, and bewailed their own sins and those of their benefactors, and pondered over the health of the soul. And there were in that field huts of straw matting and of dried grass, differing in form for the Brothers of divers provinces, and for this reason these fields are known as the fields of grass or of matting! For beds they had

the bare earth, some with a little straw; their pillows were of wood or stone.' Nor were the cells of the Saint and his companions much better; woven of branches and boughs, plastered with mud, and small in the extreme, the brothers might imagine themselves visiting the Franciscan sanctuary of Monteluco, in Spoleto, 'into which one enters with difficulty, and when within can only take three steps'.

And it was at Sta. Maria that he wished to die. Lying ill at Assisi, he said, 'Find some way of carrying me, for I cannot walk'. Then the brothers took him in their arms and carried him, accompanied by many citizens, and as they passed an hospital on the way, St. Francis said to those who supported him, 'Put me down and turn me towards the city', and when he was placed with his face towards Assisi, he blessed the city many times, saying, 'Blessed be thou of God, O Holy City, because through thee many souls will be saved, and in thee many servants of God will dwell, and through thee many will reach the realms of eternal life.'

And after these words he was carried to Sta. Maria degli Angeli.

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Again we read in the *Fioretti*, 'St. Francis, being on the day of carnival close by the lake of Perugia, in the house of one of his followers with whom he had spent the night, was inspired by God that he should go and pass that Lenten Fast on an island of that said lake. And St. Francis besought this disciple, for the love of Christ, that he would

SANTA MARIA DEGLI ANGELI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

ISOLA MAGGIORE FROM LAKE TRASIMENE
(*Photo. Alinari*)

take him in his little ship to an island of the lake where no one dwelt, and that he would do this on the night of Ash Wednesday, so that no one should see them. And this disciple for the great devotion that he had for St. Francis, speedily fulfilled his desire and took him to the said island: and St. Francis took with him only two little loaves. And having reached the island, and the friend leaving to return home, St. Francis prayed him heartily that he would not reveal to any one where he was, and that he would only come back to fetch him on Holy Thursday, and so this one departed. And St. Francis remained alone: and there not being any habitations in which he could shelter, he went into a thick hedge, where the wild plum trees and bushes formed a little hut in the shape of a nest; and in this place he betook himself to prayer and to contemplation of things celestial. And there he continued all through Lent, without eating and without drinking, except the half of one of those little loaves; and thus he was found by his disciple on Holy Thursday'.

I follow the walls of Passignano with their towers and tracery down to the edge of the lake, and enter a boat. Everything is blue in the light of the spring noon-tide: water, mountains, sky, and everything calm and noiseless. The boatman attempts conversation, but when I do not respond, he is silent. No other sound than that of the oars and of splashing water. No reminder of the famous battle on these banks in which Hannibal defeated the Romans and the Flaminian Consul, but the lake in its

infinite peace and sweetness, seems to mirror the pure and lonely soul of St. Francis. We pass near the Isola Minore, called the Serpent Isle. I see but one house and that seems uninhabited; all around there is low and dense vegetation which on the summit changes to a clump of pines. Only on one side is the woody undergrowth broken by oblique strata of grey stone, and below, the shore seems hidden in a veil of rushes. Between the two large islands reappears the stretch of Trasimene shut in by the mountains of Bellaveduta and Marzolara. Isola Polvese, with the ruins of the convent of San Secondo, seems to lose itself in a verdant shadow of distance.

And now we are at Isola Maggiore, less wooded than the other. Near the landing-place rise some rocks covered with moss and crowned with olives. I land and find myself on a good road, having the lake on one side and fishermen's cottages on the other. I see also a twelfth-century church with a carved door, and some ruined houses. Ascending gradually, I come to a suppressed convent, now become Villa Guglielmi. The lake, notwithstanding the peace and bright light, gives a profound sense of sadness. It seems that the towers of Passignano and Castiglione watch over the midday sleep, and that they awake it with the gentle sound of church bells.

When St. Francis landed, the island was wild and uninhabited, but after the wonderful fast that he made there, 'Men began to build houses and live in them, and in a short time they made a great and grand castle and

there was the place of the Brothers which is called "The Place of the Island", and still men and women of that castle have great veneration and devotion in the place where St. Francis kept the Lenten fast'.

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I have seen San Leo, the home of Orlando Catani, count of Chiusi in Casentino, who gave La Verna to St. Francis, and I have seen La Verna. The two rocks resemble each other; both steep and terrifying. On the 8th of May, 1213, St. Francis and Brother Leone betook themselves to San Leo, the retreat of the Feltreschi. There were solemn festivities going on 'because of the new knighthood of one of the counts of Montefeltro'.

The Saint preached in the piazza and entered into the presbytery, and into the cathedral, still existing and which bears the date of its consecration 1173.

Orlando said to St. Francis, 'I have a holy mountain in Tuscany, called the Mount of La Vernia, which is very solitary and wild, and it would be well suited to one who wishes to do penitence in a spot far removed from the world, or who desires a solitary life.' St. Francis was very grateful for the gift, but before accepting it, he desired that some of his companions should see if it were 'adapted for prayer and penitence'. And such in very truth they found it.

La Verna is the principal place in the life of the Saint: not less so than Assisi, not less than the Porziuncola, because it was there, on the summit of the 'rude rock'

that he received the 'final seal'. Francis followed his companions to the mountain, and finding its severe solitude absolutely adapted for communion with God, he begged Orlando 'that he would have a simple cell made at the foot of a beautiful beech tree, a stone's throw from the place of the Brothers because that spot seemed to him to be truly suitable for devout prayer'.

And the story goes on: 'There, after a few days had passed, St. Francis, being close to the said cell, and considering the formation of the mountains, marvelling at the great fissures and tearing asunder of the huge rocks, he betook himself to prayer; and then did God reveal to him that those marvellous fissures appeared miraculously at the hour of the Passion of Christ, when, according to the Evangelist, the rocks were rent asunder. And thus God, who wonderfully appeared in the Mount of La Verna, wished to renew the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ in his soul by love and compassion, and in his body by the imprinting of the sacred Stigmata.'

I bow before the profound mystery of the miracle: I glory in its high poetry. 'All the Mount of La Verna (says the writer of the *Fioretti*) seemed as though it burned with the most splendid fire which lit and illuminated the surrounding mountains and valleys, as though it were the sun upon the earth; therefore the shepherds watching in that region, seeing the flaming mountain and so much light around, had very great fear, and thus they afterwards recounted to the Brothers, declaring that this flame

on the Mount of La Verna lasted for the space of one hour, and more. In like manner, some muleteers going to Romagna, seeing the brilliance of this light which shone through the windows of the country inn, awoke, thinking that the sun was risen, and saddled and loaded their beasts; and journeying, they saw this said light cease, and the actual sun appear.'

The buildings constructed by the Brothers on this Franciscan mountain have not always been a success, nor suited to the lonesome beauty of the place. There are still some wild spots, as, for example, the Sasso Spicco, the 'bed of St. Francis', the rock of Fra Lupo, the grotto of Fra Leone, but the lowliness of the first inhabitants is too much obscured and suffocated by houses, churches, refectories, cloisters, chapels, pictures and sculptures of every description; mostly mediocre, from which one must alone exclude the enamelled terra-cottas of Andrea della Robbia, in their charming simplicity. The actual spot where, according to tradition, the Saint received the Stigmata, is converted into a church rich with a vainglorious richness. But what hope is there when the Order which actually has it in custody writes: 'In the year 1895 a pavement of gothic design has been substituted for the rough and uneven one of 1742. The new one is made of hard stone, white, dark and red combining geometrically the style of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and which harmonizes wonderfully with the altar, the choir and the rest of the church'?

Also it is sad to see a chapel close by, converted into a shop for the sale of post-cards, guide-books and images, commerce in direct opposition to the spirit of the spot, and which ought to take place lower down, at the Beccia.

However, La Verna remains none the less the most impressive of the Franciscan holy places; for notwithstanding that man has made discord, it is surpassed by the grandeur of the mountains, of the rocks, of the forest, and happily one may say also, by the devotion of the Brothers.

In the woods, under the shade of pines and of beeches, amongst the undergrowth of the holly and the ash, one may still find quiet and wild recesses where it is possible to bury oneself and live with thoughts Beyond the Tomb, reawakening the remembrance of the life of poverty and of prayer led there by the most holy Saint; and thus going farther up the hill to the Penna, the immensity of the view detaches the soul from the low and base affairs of this earth.

With what sorrow did I leave La Verna! The sound of the bells of San Bonaventura accompanied me, and I knew not how to withdraw my gaze from the 'rude rock'. Ah! the sorrow of St. Francis as, weeping, he left it for the last time. And his spirit bled as had the Stigmata when it pierced his hands, and feet and breast.

A Dio Monte,
A Dio Monte d'Alverna,
A Dio Monte d'Angeli.

III. FRANCISCAN VISIONS IN DANTE AND IN GIOTTO

THE RUDE ROCK OF LA VERNA
(*Photo. Alinari*)

THE SASSO SPICCO OF LA VERNA
(*Photo. Alinari*)

FRANCISCAN VISIONS IN DANTE AND IN GIOTTO

DANTE, in the Paradiso, places side by side the praises of St. Francis and St. Dominic and demonstrates the tendency, equal in the end, diverse in the method of the one and the other.

Uniting in one hymn the glory of the two greatest saints of the thirteenth century, it is admirable to see how, in a poetic manner, almost symmetrical, he obtains the effect of the powerful contrast which really existed in their characters.

If the Middle Ages were soft and sentimental as they have been depicted and described by a false art, these two saints would either not have existed,—or would not have appeared so wonderful in modern times.

But in those times it was possible for a tyrant such as Ezzelino da Romano to flourish and wreak his vengeance on those who offended him, even on women and children. Law and Right had given place to Force and Arrogance: the poor and the weak lived like slaves, and while Italy was bleeding still from the deep wounds inflicted on her by Frederick Barbarossa, yet, already in many places, men grown up to arms and violence began to issue forth from their houses or to descend from their impregnable castles, like greedy eagles from the nest, to destroy the liberty of the citizens.

On the other hand, in many parts of Latin Europe, specially in Lombardy and in Southern France, where

better conditions existed, divers sects arose which disputed the pontifical authority. Well known amongst these are the Patarini, Catari, and Albigesi—these last are best known owing to their greater culture. Taking advantage of the liberty they enjoyed under Raymond of Toulouse, they rose against the Catholic Church. They held public Councils, their poets derided even while serving the Court of Rome; their missionaries diffused their ardent beliefs in Italy, in Germany and in Flanders. They held that the authority of the Pope in matters spiritual, and also in the discipline and the ceremonies of the Roman Church, was illegitimate and erroneous.

However at this time a man of great intellect became Head of the Church, Innocent III. He recognized how Religion could benefit from the different spirits of St. Francis and of St. Dominic, thus after brief hesitation he both helped them and asked for their aid. In a dream they are shown upholding the Lateran which is falling.

Thus against boastful ostentation and the violence of the laity, is opposed the gentle and resigned humility of the Poor Brother of Assisi; against the intellectual heresy, specially of the Albigesi, is opposed the unshakable faith of St. Dominic with his powerful preaching. From these facts Dante draws the poetic conception of the marriage of Francis with Poverty, of Dominic with Faith.

St. Dominic had in fact all the positive faculties of his age. In his mission he found useful even the sombre Iberian character and his deep theological erudition. We

find him indeed teaching Holy Scripture in the same Palencia where he had studied as a youth; then Theology in Rome where he comments on the Epistles of St. Paul. He aids and teaches the higher classes and has more in common with them than with the ignorant and uncultured. He goes to arrange the marriage of Alfonso IX, King of Castile, with the daughter of the Count de la Marche; returning with his Bishop Diego of Azebedo to fetch the princess, they find her on her death-bed and can only assist at her funeral.

History clears him from the accusation of having been the founder of the Tribunal of the Inquisition, already thought of at the Council of Verona when Dominic was but fourteen years of age and regularly established only eight years after his death. But his life was a struggle, and Dante speaks of him justly as 'the athlete consecrate, Kind to his own and cruel to his foes'.

His activity is febrile, his oratory formidable. He founds monasteries, gathering in to his Order, Ladies, Cavaliers, Doctors; assists at Councils, defending the title of his Order with Honorius III. He is continually travelling; from Italy he goes to France, then on to Spain preaching everywhere, until he finds himself in that bloody theatre where one of the most terrible human dramas has taken place: the repression, nay, the suppression of the Albigesi. The celebrated cry of the Legate of Rome, 'Kill them all, God will know His own!' is controversial but characteristic. At the beginning of the fight, Dominic

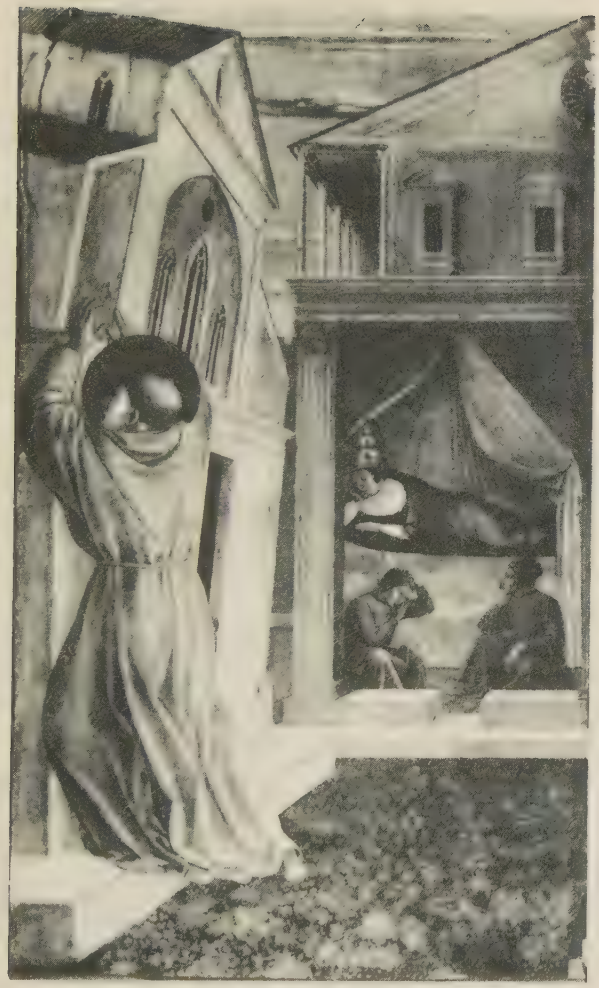
promises the victory to the Count of Montfort, and during the battle, he prays in the Church of Muret, that the massacre may be complete!

Finally, he retires to Bologna where in that populous city he may gather in to his Order those who have gone to that learned centre, both for scientific and theological studies. He himself invites discussion and disdains acts of ingenuous and cringing humility, so much so, that in a fit of irritation, he one day refuses a donation made to his Convent! He wishes to live and fight for the Faith, where the combat is most fierce, where it seems to him that minds are keenest in the search for dogma, and Dante, whose every word clothes a thought, says:

> Then with the doctrine and the will together,
> With office apostolical he moved,
> Like torrent which some lofty vein out-presses;
> And in amongst the shoots heretical
> His impetus with greater fury smote,
> Wherever the resistance was the greatest.

. . . . . .

St. Francis, on the contrary, is the popular saint, mild and patient, the inspired democratic saint in the exact sense of the word. He does not rebel like St. Dominic against the enemies of the Faith, but would rather conquer them with humility. He offers therefore his left cheek to those who smite the right. He says to his companion, 'I throw myself supine on the ground, put your foot on my throat and the other on my mouth, and thus turn me over three



THE DREAM OF THE FALLING LATERAN: FROM THE FRESCO BY BENOZZO IN SAN FRANCESCO DI MONTEFALCO
(*Photo. Alinari*)

EXTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF SAN FRANCESCO, ASSISI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

times.' With him quantity of faith counts, with St. Dominic the quality; in him feeling, in St. Dominic dogma. Like St. Dominic he is not feared and saluted by crowds, but at first 'is like a madman derided and thrust away with stones and mud, both by relatives and strangers, he in every injury and derision remaining patient, and as it were deaf and dumb'. His words do not thunder powerfully, threatening anathema and eternal pain and woe to heretics, his words are not saturated with theological erudition, and are not addressed to the learned. He in the superhuman expansion of his soul addresses himself to the poor, he speaks to the birds, leaves, streams, feeling that the spirit of God is in every place; in him burns the fire of charity which explains every thing and every creature of the Universe.

This all-embracing tenderness towards the smallest creatures and his pity for every suffering being, in an age when most men 'dealt in bloodshed, and in pillaging', could but raise and exalt the oppressed, who saw in St. Francis but a deeper expression of their misery and anguish. He was therefore one of the strongest coöperators in the development and diffusion of that mysticism which in the twelfth century flowed over human iniquity like a beneficial rain upon the arid fields of summer.

For we must remember that St. Francis was not the Saint of the Populace remaining amongst the people to comfort and relieve them. St. Francis knew riches, had lived in ease with his parents, for all know that his father

was an important cloth merchant, and his mother probably of noble birth, which may explain the fine feelings of the Poor Man.

. . . . . .

And the disciples who followed him, what abnegation they showed as a tribute to the charity of their master! When the corpse of Sixtus IV was carried into the Church of St. Peter, with only twenty torches, covered with a ragged and dirty pall, no one was willing to remain and pray beside it. The rabble was raging outside in the deserted streets while the body, black, deformed, with a swollen throat, was decomposing. Only an unknown Franciscan watched beside it night and day, suffering its horror and praying for the soul of the dead. Thus on the arrival of Duke Valentino in Forlì he found four Brothers devoutly saying vespers, while all the Canons had fled.

And this does but accentuate the Dantesque contrast between the two saints:—even to the background of the picture; behind and around St. Dominic is the populous and dark Palencia, or courts tormented with passions; and Rome and Toulouse, where minds and hearts are agitated and astir.

Behind St. Francis we see a tranquil landscape, solitary and shining. For his penance he seeks an islet lost in the centre of the melancholy Trasimene lake. Then he goes to preach on the rocks of Montefeltro, afterwards in the secluded woods of La Verna, 'The rude rock, between Tiber and the Arno'. After a Council St. Dominic shuts

himself into his lonely cell by night in the middle of a busy city. St. Francis, on the contrary, takes his repose uncovered on the bare ground, in the open country, near the place where he had held the Chapter of the Rushes, and blesses his beloved Assisi refulgent in the sun.

Even the art which was inspired by their burial-places reflects the singular contrast of these two great souls: over the body of St. Dominic there are the sculptures of Nicola Pisano, in which reappears the artistic strength of Rome: over the tomb of St. Francis there are the tranquil, thoughtful Giottesque pictures, reminding us often of the thought of Alighieri, who not only understood these contrasts, translating them into famous verse, but gave to these poetic descriptions a 'musical value' so varied and profound as to render the contrast of types and of places even more sensible and intense.

The Terzine are grave in which he describes Calaurega, the country of the Spanish Saint with his forceful influence and inflexible will, but the verses in which he sings of the divine spirit of St. Francis portray the candid piety and the gentle tranquillity of the Umbrian solitude.

It is difficult for anyone to apprehend the thoroughly intimate beauty of the Dantesque poetry, unless he has been to Assisi, resting on 'the fertile slope of lofty mountain'. A hundred streams of limpid water murmur in the silence of the lonely roads, and far above, the citadel dominates the splendid panorama. To the right the Tescio flows into the Chiascio, that is the water that descends

from Gubbio, 'from the hill elect of blessed Ubald'; to the left, the Topino, together with the Ose, joins the Chiascio near Bettona, and uniting merrily they throw themselves into the Tiber, which flows proudly onward, as though conscious of its historic grandeur, anxious to reach the walls of the Eternal City. And beyond the plain, and across the Tiber, there are five or six chains of mountains melting into the horizon—and on either side many blue hills; and Perugia, where art and speech alike have charm, looks towards us from her vaporous height.

. . . . . .

Ascending the hill to Assisi, mind and eyes alike turn to the left where the temple of St. Francis appears behind a double row of arches, which has the appearance of an enormous viaduct. The temple has three stories; profound, deep, cut in the living rock, the lowest holds the tomb of the Saint; far larger is the central church, adorned with sepulchral monuments and decorated by Simone Martini, by the Lorenzetti, Gaddi, Giotto and other famous men, but sombre, compressed, obscure. Majestic, elevated, luminous, on the contrary, is the church above, where the Giottesque paintings are seen together with those of Cimabue and Pietro Cavallini. The different aspect of the three churches suggests a strange comparison with the three regions of death, but this suggestion is repellent because in the deepest and lowest which might represent the Inferno, there is the venerated tomb of the Holy Brother, and so in the central church, which would

UPPER CHURCH OF SAN FRANCESCO, ASSISI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

LOWER CHURCH OF SAN FRANCESCO, ASSISI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

be the Purgatorio, the work of Giotto appears meditative and complex.

Giorgio Vasari said that the stories of Assisi were inventions of Dante, with whom the Florentine painter would have disputed on the arguments of his pictures.

Modern criticism both denies these assertions and also that the Poet and the Painter met in other towns of Italy. However, as one proceeds slowly in the examination of historical coincidence, the presence of Dante in some place where Giotto was working appears less dubious. Alighieri says that he was in Padua in 1305. Well, it seems that his acute imagination is to be discerned in some allegorical figures painted by Giotto in the celebrated chapel of the Scrovegni: Charity is girdled by a rosy hue, with three living flames on her head, expressing love, and in her right hand a vase of flowers and fruit; and Temperance is tranquil and secure, with a little bit in the mouth, and the hilt of her sword bound by a ribbon to the sheath, so that prudent may be both words and acts. But if the help of Dante may be seen in these hypothetical figures, one must not think equally hypothetical the paintings of the Inferno on the entrance wall.

The study of many representations of the Inferno to be found in Italy, of an earlier date than 1306, makes one believe that by actual date, the Giottesque Inferno of Padua is the first one divided into circles. In the mosaic of Torcello, the Inferno occupies several compartments, but only for decorative reasons.

In conclusion, before the day of Giotto's fresco, we only find in the obscure paintings and puerile sculptures depicting the Inferno, a disordered collection of nude figures, and of demons armed with flails; all the damned are in an open plain, with flames, darkness and serpents.

Now, what reason is there to exclude from the work of the Painter, every possible suggestion of the Poet? for critics now agree that Alighieri and Giotto were in Padua together, and in the frightful and grotesque narration of Beyond the Tomb, anterior to Dante, there does not appear a true and proper distinction of the punishments ('a penal classification'). Certainly it is not permissible to believe the converse, that is, that Dante received inspiration from Giotto, for, although the Dantesque *Inferno* was not yet published in 1306, still the idea was already conceived and possibly some of the Cantos written.

Thus later, in the last years of his life, Dante sought Giotto, and is with him in the shade of the 'divine forest, thick and living', on the deserted shore of the Adriatic, near the tombs of the latest Cæsars.

. . . . . .

And now let us return to Assisi and enter into the splendid temple of St. Francis. In the four compartments of the central vault of the middle church, Giotto and his disciples frescoed the allegory of Chastity and of Obedience, the Glory of St. Francis and his marriage with Poverty.

Chastity is seen on the summit of a sea-girt tower with

indented bastions. To arrive in her presence, wings are necessary, and indeed two flying angels accost her: the one offering her the helmet for defence, and the other a branch of perpetual evergreen, which, like virginal virtue, the mortal body notwithstanding, can keep one ever young. Below, at the foot of a castle, is a crowd of warriors and of angels, distinct in three symbolic groups: St. Francis receiving three devotees who go to him asking the cross and poverty; a young man purified in a tank and re-baptized by the angels, and finally Venus, unchaste, pursued by other angels with the scourge, crab and Cross. This scene is tragically grotesque. Death with four wings expels a naked young man, before whom is Venus, bound and girdled by a cord from which hangs a quiver with many human hearts. Her feet are those of a rapacious eagle. She is thrust into the arms of Vice, who has the head of a wild boar, and although thrown on the ground, holds out his arms desirously.

Not less popular is the allegory of Obedience, portrayed in a placid figure with a severe and pallid face, the index finger of the left hand raised to enforce silence, while with the right she places a yoke on the Saint. At her sides are Humility, a maiden holding a lighted taper with downcast looks, and opposite, Prudence with two faces united in one head, one old expressing reflection, one young showing discreet and gracious compliance. She holds in her hand a mirror with which she dazzles a kind of centaur with a body of a man, the forefeet of a horse,

the hind legs of a wolf, a triple symbol of prevalent vices: Pride, Envy and Avarice.

But neither the two allegories already described, nor the rich and varied glory of St. Francis attract the attention and awake the admiration to the same extent as the fourth picture, which depicts the allegory of Poverty, which is noteworthy not only because of the execution and holy mirth of the subject, but also and indeed, even more, for the counterpart of thoughts that we find in the *Divine Comedy*. At the corners, as in the allegory of Chastity, we see two groups of contrary character. To the left a youth divesting himself of his garment to cover an old beggar, to the right another youth holding a falcon, symbolic of pleasure, and who makes a motion of contempt towards Poverty; near him is an aged man, the figure of Avarice, clutching to his bosom a purse of money. But on high and in the midst of a crown of angels, all religiously attentive and absorbed, Jesus Christ performs the marriage of Poverty with the Little Brother of Assisi. Jesus holding His head slightly back with His gaze on St. Francis, touches with His right hand the right of the Bride, who is yielding herself with a celestial smile to the marriage, and with the left hand transmits the ring, received from the Saint, to Hope. The latter raises her hand to take it, while Charity, who is beside her represented with a garland of roses and the three flames, as at Padua, timidly offers a heart to the bride and bridegroom.

And what an enchanting figure is Poverty!

In front of her is a barking dog, and a boy throwing a stone, whilst another child tries to hit her with a stick. She cares not: she gazes at Francis smiling. She wears a ragged white tunic, patched and pieced, tied at the side by a cord. She steps on a dry thorny bush, but from it rises a long spray gladdened in front with leaves and roses.

And Dante tells us that Francis incurred the anger of his father, because he wedded Poverty:

> For he in youth his father's wrath incurred
> For certain Dame, to whom, as unto death,
> The gate of pleasure no one doth unlock:
> And was before his spiritual court
> Et coram patri was to her united;
> Then day by day more fervently he loved her.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Their concord and their joyous semblances,
> The love, the wonder and the sweet regard,
> They made to be the cause of holy thoughts;
> So much so that the venerable Bernard
> First bared his feet, and after so great peace
> Ran, and in running, thought himself too slow.
> O wealth unknown! O veritable good!
> Giles bares his feet, and bares his feet Sylvester
> Behind the bridegroom, so doth please the bride!

Some writers of the history of painting have observed that in this last allegory, the chief group hardly corresponds with the poem of Dante.

In this case their defect comes from lacking a greater

knowledge of the *Divine Comedy*, for many other likenesses is it easy to find there. As in the Canto of the Paradiso, so also in the fresco, the Saint therefore weds Poverty. To give a true impression of her condition, we see the dog advancing towards her, and Dante accurately notices that 'aristocratic vice of education', for dogs bark naturally at persons badly dressed and barefoot.

> With the same fury, and the same uproar,
> As dogs leap out upon a mendicant,
> Who on a sudden begs, where'er he stops.

The figure of the youth holding the falcon on his wrist is making towards Poverty the unseemly action that the thief Vanni Fucci makes towards God in the Inferno. And finally, is it not easy to find in Dante the symbol of the roses and the thorns? He uses it exactly like Giotto, to show that many things which superficially seem and are sad and painful may be converted into a delight and benefit.

> For I have seen all winter long the thorn
> First show itself intractable and fierce,
> And after bear the rose upon its top.

. . . . . .

Although useful, it would be too vast an argument to examine the Giottesque pictures treating of symbolic and biographical episodes of the life of St. Francis, both in Assisi and in Santa Croce in Florence, but we need not continue the descriptions.

Rumohr would not linger on these paintings, calling them 'too conventional'. To us it seems that he sees a defect when he should find a virtue. He does not notice the psychological harmony, so to speak, between St. Francis and Giotto, does not observe that the Giottesque art, precisely by virtue of the symbol, by the allegorical explanation and by the technique itself, is the art that better than any other can express the Franciscan conception, in the same way that the poetry of Dante is symbolic and allegorical. In the Hymn of St. Francis to Creation and in the *Fioretti* there breathes a poetic spirit almost superhuman, which has the undefinable value of some Christian parables. The more, therefore, that art can distract itself from the concrete and thus become spiritual, so much the better does it fulfil the letter of the Hymn and of the *Fioretti*, and thus better portray the spirit of the Saint.

We have said that the Giottesque technique lends itself also to this argument. Its forms and colours far from the real go to complete this abstruseness. Giotto is often constrained to express an ideal peace and tranquillity in his figures, and in his 'choral masses' a similar religious attention, because, as yet, the new art is unskilful in surprising all the movements that the potent Renaissance may give to the human body.

From Masaccio onwards, it would have seemed to an artist to be a proof of little ability and less imagination to make two figures alike: while Giotto and his school, on the contrary, did not hesitate to make one hundred figures

all turned in the same direction, and with their arms equally extended or closed.

Besides this, clothing does not show the shape of the body, it seems indeed that under the folds, no human members are hidden. And in this manner the figures assume a spiritual aspect, almost as though they were free, and barely touching the earth. 'They seem ready to leave it at the first invitation from heaven. And the almond-shaped eyes, fixed, and without lucid expression, without the luminous sparks of the pupil, seem eyes profoundly absorbed, in which faith has extinguished all terrestrial desire, all earthly cupidity!'

What a difference from the Saints and Madonnas of Raffael, of A. del Sarto, of Titian and of Allegri! all smiling, florid, human! What a difference between the strict and polished execution of thirteenth century and the brushwork of those artists whom Vasari calls, with reason, 'flesh painters'!

When we see St. Francis and his disciples suffering in silence the sadness of the world, preoccupied by heaven and not by earth, absorbed in contemplative ecstasy and in the vision of supernatural good, we must perceive a full correspondence with the art of Giotto and the poetry of Dante.

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At the first breath of naturalistic art the form of the Poor Man changes. In the work of the Umbrian painters, Perugino and Pintoricchio, when he is present with other

MARRIAGE OF ST. FRANCIS WITH POVERTY: FROM A PAINTING BY GIOTTO, IN THE LOWER CHURCH OF SAN FRANCESCO, ASSISI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

MEETING OF ST. FRANCIS AND ST. DOMINIC: FROM THE FRESCO BY BENOZZO IN THE CHURCH OF SAN FRANCESCO AT MONTEFALCO (*Photo. Alinari*)

saints in their symmetrical compositions, his is a sweet and simple figure, no longer ecstatic and without the depth and symbolism that are his by right. In the paintings of Fra Angelico, he maintains still this same simplicity, because this master is but a spirit of the thirteenth century launched into the following one,—the same applies to Benozzo Gozzoli, the faithful follower, though with less spirituality, of the Blessed Angelico.

And as art proceeds, he gradually loses more of his primitive character. In a picture of the family Pesaro by Titian, except for the contemplative air of the thirteenth century, he abandons the repose and simplicity of the fourteenth. Then in the paintings of the sixteenth century he becomes lymphatic and almost dull. In the Academy of S. Ferdinand in Madrid, there is a canvas of Murillo in which one may see him listening to an angel playing the violin, with the expression of a weary man.

Let us advance further, and St. Francis with few exceptions, will appear more tragically solemn than a Pergamene orator with book, skull and cross, looking nearly always grave and severe, and hardly ever with that happy air and sweet expression of which Dante speaks; and we shall see him in bare cavern or dark cell, or else in a gilded church, but no more in the wide and luminous landscape of Assisi or of La Verna, of the Porziuncola or of Lake Trasimene. In the Antwerp Museum we may see the last Communion of St. Francis by Rubens, a picture of great artistic merit, but unpleasing in conception. The foundation is a

Baroque church with shining marble columns crowned by Corinthian capitals and an altar protected by a baldacchino of damask. The priest, amongst the clergy, richly robed in gold and embroidered chasuble, gives the Host to St. Francis, who is dragged naked to the altar by a number of Brothers. The picture at once recalls to mind the Communion of St. Jerome by Caracci, and that one even more celebrated by Domenichino in the Vatican. And here also he seems a fanatical martyr, an apostle afflicted by faith; not the saint happy in his sacrifice, the saint ingenuous, calm, content with a felicity that none but he comprehends and feels, not the pious humble monk who talks to the swallows and sings the glory of God, consoled, with his spirit on high like the lark of Dante which springs freely in the air, overcome by the sweetness of its own song.

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St. Francis of Assisi met St. Dominic several times. In Rome, before Innocent III, at the Porziuncola during the Chapter of the Mats, at Cremona and at Bologna. This last city had then a special importance in the world. Study procured for it the concourse of the most celebrated doctors and scholars of Central Europe. It is therefore but natural that propagators of the Faith and founders of New Orders should congregate there.

We have seen that St. Dominic established himself there, and there died. Francis sent one of his Apostles, Bernardo, and the *Fioretti* recounts that 'The children seeing him in an

old and tattered habit, scorned and abused him as they would do a madman, yet Fra Bernardo patiently and joyfully bore with everything for the love of Christ: indeed so that he might be more mocked he actually betook himself to the market-place, and sitting there, many children and men came round about him; and one would pull his hood behind and one in front: one would throw dust and one stones, one seized him from here and one from there, and Fra Bernardo continued always in one mood, the same patient mood, with a cheerful countenance, and did not move, and did not complain; and for many days he returned to this same spot to endure similar things. And the patience gained him the faith and conversion of many'. And it was not long before St. Francis went there himself and found St. Dominic. 'Arriving one day in the city of Bologna all the people of the city ran to see him, and so great was the crowd, that the people with great difficulty could enter the piazza, and there were men and women and scholars: and St. Francis rose up in the middle of that place, and stood high, and began to preach that which the Holy Spirit taught him, and he preached so marvellously, that it seemed as though it were an angel rather than a man, and his words were like celestial arrows, piercing the hearts of those who heard them; and by reason of that discourse a great number of men and of women were converted to penitence. Amongst these were two noble students from the Marches of Ancona, who were both touched to the heart by this same inspired preaching, and they came to

St. Francis saying that they would wholly abandon the world.'

In addition to the *Fioretti*, we have the testimony of Thomas of Spalato, who was a Scholar of Bologna in 1220, and who actually saw the person and heard the unequal words, though always ardent and inspired, of the Monk of Assisi on the Feast of the Assumption. He recounts how Francis preached in the Piazza in front of the old Palace of the Commune, not theological arguments, but the theme of peace and pardon between the citizens of the troubled city. Thomas describes him shabby in clothing, frail in person and suffering in face. But what powerful sweetness in his words! For his sake many old offences were forgiven and Niccolo dei Pepoli and Rizziero da Modena and Bonizio and Pellegrino entered his order.

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The following year St. Dominic died, while the foundations were being laid of the first church of the Friars Minor. Glorious years followed for Bologna; the art of the Pisani, animated by the inspiration of classicism, left there a masterpiece and Giovanni da Brescia built the Gothic nave of San Francesco. In the sanctuary of the magnificent church, amongst the cypresses, arose the sepulchres and pyramids of the scholiasts to whom we owe the revival of the ancient juridical grandeur, and the monuments of the poets of the 'gentil stil nuovo'. Every one in death desired to lie under the protection of St. Francis, artisan and artist, philosopher and poet.

ROCCAPORENA. THE BUILDING ON THE LEFT, WITH THE BELFRY, IS THE HOUSE OF RITA, NOW A CHURCH
(*Photo. Martiani*)

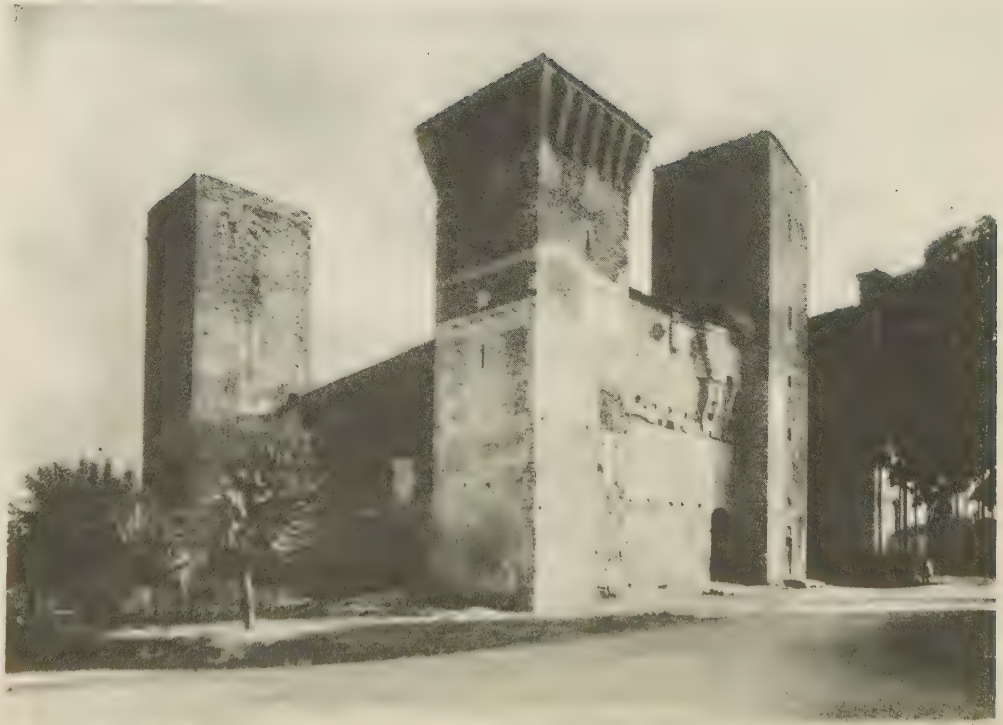
THE FUNERAL CHEST OF ST. RITA, IN THE CONVENT OF STA. RITA, CASCIA
(*Photo. Min. Istruzione*)

Instead, in San Domenico there is the tomb of one great man, King Enzo,[1] the fair son of the Emperor Frederick, dead in captivity, the proud eagle fallen into the claws of the Guelphic lion!

[1] Enzo, King of Sardinia, son of Frederick II, taken prisoner by the Bolognesi 1249, died 1279.

IV. ST. RITA

PORTRAIT OF PERUGINO BY HIMSELF, IN THE SALA DEL CAMBIO AT PERUGIA (*Photo. Alinari*)



CITADEL OF CITTA DELLA PIEVE
(*Photo. Alinari*)

ST. RITA

THE rain is over, but the sky is still obscured every now and then by little light misty clouds. We are on our way from Poggiodomo to Roccaporena, when suddenly we see an unforgettable scene: the gloomy rock of St. Rita shining like a golden nugget set with jewels in the brilliant and fitful sunshine. A rainbow crowns the summit, while far below the river dashes along in its rocky bed. Even the village seems to laugh in the clear atmosphere! There in that little hamlet, amongst those frowning rocks, many centuries ago, a little peasant baby was born and christened Margherita, known in the district as Rita; she had an unhappy marriage and towards the end of her life she entered the Augustinian Convent of Cascia; in 1628 she was beatified, and in 1900 was canonized.

The brilliance of the day seems to compare with the glory of the Saint! An old peasant takes us into the village church, which was formerly the house of Rita; taken for sacred use two years after her beatification, it now contains as relics the white goatskin which she used to wear, and a picture after the style of Luca Giordano in which sixteenth-century pomp strives for mastery with the humility of St. Rita.

The devotion of Roccaporena for the Saint is great. We are shown the cave where she passed long hours in meditation attracted by a religious life; we hear of her early life.

A touching story is that her father and mother, Antonio and Amata, took the baby one day with them, and while they worked in the fields, they left her under some shady trees in her basket cradle. A wonderful day—the peasants singing, the birds twittering, while the silver willows rustled by the River Corno, and the baby opened her blue eyes to the sky above and clapped her little hands with delight when a swarm of bees came all around her; some entered her mouth, and without stinging, gently put the honey between her lips. No cry from the child disturbed her parents, but just then a reaper close by cut his hand with the sickle. He was hastening towards the village to find some one to bind up his wound, when passing by the cradle, he saw the swarm of bees around the baby's head. He stopped and waved his arms to drive them away, when suddenly his hand ceased bleeding, and the cut was healed!

At his cry of astonishment Antonio and Amata ran up, and the bees flew away!

Later on, when Rita had entered the Convent, bees came there too, and took possession of the walls, and are there to this day. Urban VIII, the Pope of the heraldic Bees, ordered some to be brought to him in Rome—he looked at them with interest, marked one with a strand of silk, and let it go:—it was seen again in Cascia!

. . . . . .

The maiden, dedicating herself to prayer and a solitary life, used often to go to the caves and the rocks, always against the wish of her parents, who to keep her at home

at last prepared a little room for her where she could be quite alone, giving herself to severe penance: she longed to be a nun, but much as her parents loved her, they would not consent. How could they indeed? They had no son, they were old, they must have help for their work in the fields; no, Rita must marry and have children. Her confessor counselled her to obey; so at eighteen years of age, she married a certain Paolo Ferdinando. It was a sad choice. The simple peasants were deceived by appearances, and the bridegroom was soon found to be a cruel man of bad temper, and many vices. Rita tolerated everything with docility, sure that God had set her apart for mortification; and at last her submission and sweet temper seemed to soften her husband's violence, and after the birth of two children, he really began to love and respect his wife; so much so that when he felt these violent rages coming upon him, he left the house until he was once more master of himself. But these attacks were not condoned by others as Rita had done. He had many enemies and one night he was attacked in a path near the river, and murdered.

Rita was heartbroken; notwithstanding his cruelty she loved the man, believing that eventually she would win him to God, and sad indeed that his soul had fled without the comfort of religion. She ran to the body and sank on the ground, weeping and praying. After the burial she vowed to God that she would sacrifice herself in every way if she might, in so doing, expiate the sins of her hus-

band and save him from eternal death. Then she rose as though inspired, found her children and clasped them to her breast, and gave her full forgiveness to the assassins. Thus, and only thus, did she hope that God would pardon her husband.

But while in this way her soul became more at peace, another sorrow was coming upon her. Her sons, learning of the tragedy through village gossip, began to talk of revenge. They tried to keep their ideas from their mother, but she learnt much from their grim looks and turbulent ways. She besought them to pardon the murderers as she had done, for the love of God—but without success, and every day one could see that they had inherited the violence of the father more than the gentleness of the mother.

Rita tried to soften the brutal natures in vain. Then she turned to the Crucifix, and prayed 'O Jesus, soften the hearts of my sons, or else take them to Thyself while they are still innocent'. And Jesus took them. And the brave mother wept, but thanked God with understanding.

And now that she is indeed alone, she leads a still more strenuous life of penance and hardship, scourging herself, and fasting continually. She still has the desire to enter a convent—and tries again and again, but the Nunnery at Cascia is for Virgins and she has had a husband and children!

It is a night of May, 1416. Roccaporena is sleeping —only the rivers seem alive! Rita is watching and praying, when she hears a violent knocking at the door. She goes

to the window and looks out—there is no one—still only the rivers are awake! She turns again to prayer. Once more the knocking shakes the door. Gathering up her courage, she descends and finds three austere figures, before whom she instinctively falls on her knees. They are the three special saints of her veneration—the Baptist, Augustine, and Nicholas; they sign to her to go with them.

Rita follows them by an unaccustomed way over rocks and ditches, hardly noticing the rough and uneven ground, but soon she finds a delicious fragrance in the air; she hears the birds singing, while the stars still shine upon the dark ridges of the mountains! The Saints lead her to Cascia, while it is still night; they take her mysteriously into the Convent, and vanish!

. . . . . .

We are going to Cascia. The sky is practically cloudless, and we start on the tiring path rising from the creek of the Corno to the plain of Ocosce; across this we reach Cascia in another hour and a half.

The beautiful little town, with the mountain background yet touching the river where several streams meet, is bathed in sunshine. There are small houses, dignified palaces, several churches, an abrupt rocky fortress, and as usual in an Umbrian town, a dark and imposing monastery. Assuredly in Cascia the largest buildings are the monastery of Sant' Agostino (now an hospital), that of Santa Rita and the suppressed one of Sant' Antonio. And what riches of art

are found in the small town containing but 1,000 inhabitants! We however, after seeing the fourteenth-century façade of San Francesco with the ogival portal and the rose-window above it, wend our way to Santa Rita. We enter. The church, perfumed with flowers, is dark—perhaps appears darker than it really is, for our eyes are filled with sunshine. It seems to us to be encumbered with too many altars and things of little value, if we except a panel picture called the 'Madonna delle Libere' (from a church of that name), the work of P. P. Agabiti of Sassoferrato. Between the Virgin and other saints we see Rita with a wound in her temple.

We go up to the grating behind the High Altar to see the body of the saint. The nuns, aware of our presence, though invisible to us, have gone from an inside choir to illuminate the niche containing the rich crystal urn with the clothed mummy. They draw the curtain that we may observe the coffin. The prayer of the nuns reaches us like the whispering of leaves. Then one speaks: speaks with a tender voice, as though tired, drawing out the words slowly exaggerating the accent of the country. However, as she proceeds, that dirge-like slowness ends by producing a sense of devout placidity suitable to the place.

'The body of our saint' she says 'remained uncorrupt for about three centuries in its dark blue gown of rough serge, but the necessity that arose of handling it when a fire took place and we had to move it in haste, reduced it to the state that you see. Fortunately fifty years previously

it had been taken from the early wooden chest (which thus escaped harm and which you may see if you will, in the convent) and placed in a coffin presented by Charles II of Spain. Again in the seventeenth century this was burnt, and gave way to the present one. In these coffins the holy body has sometimes moved and even raised itself to the cover. Naturally this has occurred only for great events —either grave or joyful! Once, for instance, during a tumult which arose in church, so that the wonder terrified the combatants; and even more visibly on January 14, 1703, a few seconds before a frightful earthquake destroyed nearly all Cascia. Other times it has moved in sign of exultation or of reverence, when some high prelate has come to venerate the saint.'

I broke the silence which followed by asking if the tradition of Rita still survived in the convent.

'As if the saint had died but yesterday! The nuns that lived with her and saw her die transmitted the account of her life, of her virtues, of her miracles to the younger sisters, and these growing old to others, and so on, by degrees till to-day. And thus it will be for ever.'

'Is it true' I asked 'that she entered the convent in a mysterious way after having been refused several times?'

'Certainly; she could not be received because she had had a husband and children, but her patron saints brought her in. And when the nuns, at the sound of the bell for Matins, descended into the choir, they found her absorbed in prayer. The impossibility of entering into the convent

by human means, locked as it was with many keys deposited in the cell of the Mother Superior, revealed the fact that she owed her ingress to heavenly means. Therefore she was accepted as a novice. She then wished to relieve her companions of all the hardest and most humiliating work, and tortured herself with sackcloth and flails and with fasting. Her body was tired, her face emaciated, yet she was always ready for every labour.'

'But, Mother, was it necessary that St. Rita should mortify herself in this manner? Can one not do good without self-flagellation?'

'No, sir. When human beings on the one hand abandon themselves for their own pleasure to every kind of vice, and on the other to every sort of wrongdoing to their neighbours, words alone are not enough to persuade the vicious and violent. It is necessary to show that faith verily brings forth virtue, and this latter, sacrifice; if indeed one can call it sacrifice to suffer for the love of God. To the vicious one can only teach abstinence by abstinence, to the violent tolerance and goodness by showing that it is better to suffer oneself than to make others do so. Our Lord and St. Francis of Assisi were the great masters of Rita.'

The nun was silent, deeply moved, then she continued:

'God, in the meantime, comforted her with mysterious signs and with visions. One night she saw a luminous ladder going up to heaven; such a celestial stairway had already been seen by Jacob, St. Benedict, and St. Romualdo.

THE GIVING OF THE KEYS: FROM THE FRESCO BY PERUGINO, IN THE SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME (*Photo. Alinari*)

FRESCO BY PERUGINO, IN THE SALA DEL CAMBIO, PERUGIA
(*Phot. Alinari*)

At the top stood Jesus, waiting for her, calling her. Sometimes when present at Mass, she became pale and wept, as though she was bodily present at Calvary. To try her patience and her tolerance her companions used to give her stupid tasks like the following: to water a dry piece of wood thrown away in the corner of the orchard. The wood first showed signs of moisture and then became a thriving vine which climbed up the wall, throwing out branches and tendrils and finally producing grapes! The vine is still miraculously alive and towards November it bears golden grapes. We gather some bunches and send them to our Superior, to church dignitaries, and above all to the Holy Father. The grapes are golden as the hair of Rita, and sweet and soothing as was her spirit.'

The voice of the nun had become more living, as though exulting in what she said.

'Her novitiate was therefore a triumph, so much so that she could with ease, both of heart and mind, put her hand on the Augustinian Rule and promise and swear the full observance of all that it ordained. And she was definitely admitted into the Convent, sister, not "conversa" but "corista", and that "pro forma", because, sir, that holy woman could not read, and for that reason, she was dispensed from reciting the office in the Choir.

'When she had attained her desire of being Sister, she increased rather than lessened her religious practices. Her cell was a small room, bare and rough, where she had a mat on the floor which served as a bed; she had gathered

a heap of stones and on them had placed a large crucifix, the object of her particular devotion. And when sometimes she went out of the convent——'

'What! Was she allowed to go out?'

'Yes, sir. The law of seclusion was not then so rigorous as it became later, after the Council of Trent. She therefore used to nurse the sick, or go into any house where there was trouble or dissension. The gentleness of her presence and her voice, the resignation of her gestures, was sufficient to calm the angry—she had well learnt a lesson in soothing the wild temper of her husband. There was no wound on leper, or such-like, too horrible for her to tend with loving-kindness. Thus the fame of her goodness, of her holiness spread far beyond Cascia and Roccaporena!

'She entered the Cloister with the idea of disappearing from the world: and human sorrow brought her forth to comfort!

'True, God used her in this manner. At that time a certain Franciscan, Fra Giacomo della Marca, came to preach. He fought against the many heresies that were being spread, either in bad faith or in error, by false teachers, and especially in Umbria they tried to disseminate these errors, as here Faith was strongest. Rita used to go and listen to him out of doors, for the churches would not hold the concourse of the people. Fra Giacomo was a moving preacher—he told the story of the Passion of Christ with such burning words that the listeners wept and sobbed. Jesus had suffered for all, but only he who felt His torments

could be acceptable to God. One day Fra Giacomo, after his preaching, raised his eyes to heaven and chanted: "Fac me plagis vulnerari, fac me crucis inebriare et cruore Filii." ("Let me be wounded with the wounds, let me be inebriated with the cross and the blood of the Son.") Rita went back to her convent, overwhelmed with anguish, and shutting herself in her cell, she embraced the Crucifix, and with bitter tears, prayed that she might participate in the torment: that she might suffer as He had suffered. A thorn then fell from the crown of the Crucifix and pierced her brow with such violence that it penetrated to the bone, giving her so much pain that she fainted. And the wound spread and became cancerous and so putrescent as to emit an unbearable smell. Rita was aware that the other nuns suffered when she was near, and she wished to relieve them of this annoyance; she therefore lived alone in her cell, without bitterness, because she saw in this new martyrdom of the spirit and body one more argument for the Love of Jesus, with Whom she was now in constant and solitary communion.'

'And did she not recover?'

'Listen! Nicholas V proclaimed 1450 a year of jubilee, and it was announced in Cascia, from the altar of the collegiate church. Now Rita, knowing that some nuns from her convent would go to Rome, asked permission of the Abbess to accompany them,—but the Abbess would not consent, and tried to dissuade her, giving as a reason the state of her open wound. But the real reason was that

the odour from it would have rendered the journey intolerable. Rita understood and had recourse to Jesus, praying earnestly, that without taking away the atrocious pain (for she wished to suffer), He would remove the smell that troubled her companions. And Our Saviour answered her prayer; so when nearly seventy years of age, she journeyed with the nuns from Cascia to Rome, with bare feet crossing rough mountains and deep valleys, through torrents and dense woods, till they reached Rieti; then descended through the Sabine Hills to the Via Cassia. By the way she increased her fatigue by begging for them all, for like our Serafic Father of Assisi they had gone without provisions. In Rome she again saw Fra Giacomo, and met Caterina Vigri of Bologna, Diego of Cadiz, Giovanni da Capistrano; she saw the Pope, she saw all those blessed churches and blessed altars. . . .'

'Mother, have you ever been in Rome?'

'I entered this convent as a schoolgirl when I was seven years old and have remained here ever since, as Novice and Sister. I have been here nearly fifty years by the mercy of Our Lord and of St. Rita.'

'Then, Mother, St. Rita returned. . . .'

'Yes, she returned to Cascia without any other wish than to pray and to suffer. She would have liked to nurse the sick, and pacify the violent, but no sooner did she re-enter her cell, than her wound became sore, and festered again. Four years before her death, her body consumed with fasting, with pain and with mortification,

MADONNA AND SAINTS. FROM A PAINTING IN THE PICTURE GALLERY, BOLOGNA
(*Photo. Brogi*)

THE VIRGIN APPEARS TO ST. BERNARD: FROM A PAINTING BY PERUGINO, IN THE PICTURE GALLERY, MUNICH
(*Photo. Seemann*)

lost its power and she could no longer rise from her couch. But she never complained or uttered a word but of thanks to God for her suffering, and of gratitude to the Sisters, who bore with her tenderly and brought her food. Notwithstanding her repugnant state, the faith in her holiness was so great that sometimes women of the neighbourhood came to her for counsel and spiritual help. One day, in winter, a relation from her own village visited her. . . . In saying farewell, Rita begged her to bring a rose from her cottage garden. The peasant, thinking of the winter season, considered this an idle dream, still she would not oppose the wish of a suffering woman. On returning to her village, great was her surprise to see a white rose, like snow, on the bush; she plucked it and carried it to Rita, who, smiling, then asked her to return once more to her garden and pick her some figs. This time the peasant hesitated no longer, and the figs were there!'

'Poetic miracles!'

'Miracles of faith, rather! One day, Rita announced her own death as soon approaching, and indeed it took place three days later: that is May 21, 1457. When she closed her eyes for ever, the church bells gave the sad tidings to the neighbourhood, but they were rung by no mortal hand! All the country-side came to her funeral, and every one wished to touch the holy body. Then slowly her fame spread through the whole Catholic world, from Italy to Spain, from Latin America to the Philippine Islands. Everywhere are churches dedicated to St. Rita!'

'Another miracle!'

'Yes, true, another miracle, as indeed was her fame itself. She had no advantages, she did not belong to an illustrious family, but rather to a very humble one; she lived not in a great and populous city, but amongst the desert rocks of the Apennines, she had no culture, no power. Instead she felt a tenderness for the sufferings of others, great as her own mountains; a sense of sacrifice inexhaustible as the source of her own river, and a wonderful heroism to bear her own sufferings: always strong, sir, where the spirit of others was frail and vacillating.'

The nun was silent for a moment, then continued: 'If you wish to see her cell and her coffin, please go to the entrance of the convent.'

We take our way to the whitewashed cell, which has nothing recalling its rough and primitive humility. We see a small altar, a modern painting showing the saints who brought Rita to the nunnery, and under the table there is the ancient wooden chest where her body was first deposited, and where it lay for nearly three hundred years. Another nun, old and small, spoke to us there: 'When Rita was dead, and the atrocious spasm of her wound had ceased, her face became calm and composed. The scar grew smaller and closed and there remained but a red sign like a ruby; the offensive smell ceased, transformed into an indistinct perfume like that of a thousand flowers, which lasted always and even spread through the convent and the neighbouring streets. Now look at the sarco-

phagus, it is of poplar wood lined with walnut, made by a local carpenter, Cecco Barbari, who was devoted to the saint, having been healed, by her intercession, from a severe illness. The paintings are attributed to Antonio of Norcia.'

We turn to look: in perspective are half-figures of the Magdalen, of the dead Christ and of Rita in the robe of an Augustinian nun, with the wound in her forehead and the thorn held in her right hand. On the cover there is again her figure, but full length, as in many marble sculptures of the time. Her head is on a cushion covered with damask, such as might be used at a funeral; and near it is a long metrical inscription, describing her life, her wound, her death. The hands are joined together in front, the feet are bare, and on her brow shines the wound like an embedded gem.

Behind the chest is a naked figure expressing, according to old iconography, the soul of Rita carried to Heaven on a fair cloth, by two angels.

We left the convent as the sun was setting, and went to see other churches, and the frescoes of Nicola of Siena in Sant' Antonio. But, ah me! the tardy simplicity of the work did not prevent an unknown Latin poet from placing his name beside that of Polignoto.

But nothing touched our heart after our visit to the convent and the body of Santa Rita. And we took our way to Norcia, the home of another great Umbrian saint.

V. PERUGINO

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PERUGINO

A FEW years ago I was looking at the marvellous landscape to be seen from Monte Pulciano, when the thought flashed across my mind: What if the dream of the poets be true which tells us that at the birth of a genius, a flame is lit, and if this be so, what a succession of wondrous fires must have appeared on this long chain of mountains to a watcher during the fifteenth century!

On the one side Siena, and on the other Perugia, would have appeared as two glowing lights, two proud sisters absorbed in an incomparable dream of beauty. Then along the valley of the Chiana, closed to the north by the mountains of Arezzo (where Pier della Francesca created a masterpiece of art and of thought), one would see the flame of Angelo Poliziano clear as ancient poetry; at Cortona, the flashing fire of Signorelli, and at Castel della Pieve the gentle and virginal one of Vannucci.

And it was in this same country that the vision and the artistic sentiment of Pietro Vannucci were formed: a triple vision of azure—that of mountains, of lakes, of sky; a threefold sentiment of holiness; that of Benedict, of Francis, of Clare.

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Who were the first masters of Perugino? Which was his first school? Which his first works? The answer is both easy and difficult.

Difficult if one wishes to know each place he frequented, each studio by which he profited, each picture he produced:

easy if one seeks for his earliest efforts in those of his oldest works, which proclaim his first masters to have been Umbrian, and his earliest school perhaps in that Perugia, which he considered the home of his soul and his intellect, to such an extent as to call himself Perugino.

And in his preparation he showed himself patient, attentive, retiring; not so much in order to appear suddenly as a Master, as to render himself worthy of being admitted into the most celebrated schools. Thus dexterous in design, and in the use of colour, even he, like most painters of his day, makes a Pilgrimage for the sake of Art. Descending his hill, and passing by Lake Trasimene, he turns his steps to the Arno, and there, between Arezzo and Borgo San Sepolcro, he studies under Pier della Francesca, one of Italy's greatest masters, because great in all respects: in design, in colour, in composition, in perspective, in landscape, in depth of thought, in poetic sentiment; above all in simultaneous vibration of the eye, the brain and the heart.

Pier della Francesca is one of the notable plants of the sylvan scenes of Italy. His roots go deep down into the consciousness of our race, even to the mysterious strata of the Etruscan soul; through our art, his branches spread beyond our sight. Mingled with the tender olive of Perugia, the hardy maple of Cortona and the fresh myrtle of Forlì, they end by interlacing themselves with the powerful oak of Michael Angelo and the glimmering laurel of Raffael.

Then the young Pietro Vannucci, having attained more pictorial power and the science of perspective, goes away in quest of more learning and new sensations. The bee seeking fresh flowers flies off to alight in the most beautiful and fruitful and flourishing of the gardens of Italy—Florence.

He enters into the School of Verrocchio, amongst a group of youths, prominent amongst them Leonardo da Vinci. Verrocchio, sculptor and painter, knows how to teach, but at the same time how to respect the varied inclinations of his pupils. He does not impose on them his own rough sense of realism; on the contrary, he studies to awake in them the latent virtues, even if sometimes they are in contradiction with his own taste. Nature is the basis of the common research, but to all it is permitted to contemplate her in a different and personal manner, and even to consult other masters: Benozzo, the Pollaiuoli, the Peselli and the works of the great dead: Giotto, Masaccio and Angelico.

Neither are there wanting points of contact: Leonardo and Perugino both wish to give atmosphere to the landscape and to adopt the same rules of perspective. But the spirit of Pietro remains Umbrian, as that of Leonardo Florentine. Pietro returns to Perugia without having renounced the development of his own style even in that marvellous Florence which has filled his soul with the leaven of beauty. He goes back and has a studio in both cities, covering a hundred times, in both senses, the road

that he had taken when he vested himself with the desire to learn, and lived in a happy dream of future glory.

His success in Florence is great. Soon he finds himself constrained to refuse orders, so many and so important are those that come to him. Let others enumerate and index the dates of his journeys and register his many works, both existing and lost. We need only say that amongst those who seek him are Sixtus IV, Ludovic the Dark, Isabella d'Este, the Signoria of Florence and Venice; and also Bologna, Pavia, Cremona, Siena and Rome. And everywhere Perugino leaves a happy reminder of artistic feeling; a delicate perfume on his way as of a nosegay of flowers.

Loved, admired, flattered, he does not waste an hour of his working life—a life gentle, laborious, respectful and respected. Florence chooses him with other great artists and judges for the arduous problems which rise in connection with her Cathedral, for the paintings of Santa Trinità, for the placing of the 'David' of Michael Angelo. The story of his long life has but one dramatic episode. In 1486 we find him disguising himself, together with Aulista d'Angelo also from Perugia, for the purpose of punishing a man who had offended them. The ferocious Aulista wishes to kill the culprit, Perugino only to beat him! Taken by surprise, the former is condemned to perpetual exile, the latter is simply fined, nor does he appear to have suffered in esteem, for Florence as ever, nay, more than ever, showers work upon him!

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The feeling and purity of his figures have touched the Florentine spirit, which is used to a great art, rich in infinite variety, but far from devout. At times audacious, at times full of levity; realistic always but radiant with beauty; often erudite, but suffused with poetry, it is very rarely religious. After the death of Fra Angelico, it seems to have ceased from prayer.

The same art of Angelico passing to Benozzo does not take root in his heart, is but a prayer of the lips; with Fra Lippo Lippi, it changes into adulation of amorous humanity. Fra Girolamo Savonarola, with all his fervour and vehement oratory, recalls the paganized artists to the Faith, but it is a threat which summons them from mythological and profane subjects, and which gives severity to their painting, but not the absorbed mildness, not the pious expansion which is in these days the flower of Umbrian soil alone, whose fruit matures actually with Perugino, he fixing for ever the characteristics of Umbrian art.

He has been reproached for the want of monumental sense in his composition, and for his lack of imagination, and this reproach, under a certain aspect, is just. Unlike Leonardo, he cannot by means of movement and mien express a combined whole: he does not compose his figures like Ghirlandaio, nor disperse and concentrate his masses like Signorelli. He, fourteenth century in spirit, is all symmetry, all meditation, and if the breath of the fifteenth century reaches him, it is but to give spaciousness to his single figures and life to his compositions. And we know

that he himself realized this lack because of his reluctance to paint in Orvieto the tumult of the 'Last Judgment' and the 'Preaching of the Antichrist', and in Venice, 'The Battle of Legnano'.

But we may ask ourselves if such simplicity of composition does not rather increase the religious expression; if the isolation of the figures does not rather give a sense of devout contemplation; if the symmetry does not on the whole give an atmosphere of placid spiritual peace? How often some technical fault, instead of disturbing, assists the feeling of the work! The much-admired simplicity of the twelfth-century writers, is it not sometimes poverty of language and timidity of style? Is not perhaps the mystic sentiment of the figure of the thirteenth century partly derived from the fact that under the folds of the garments there is no body, in the eyes there is no light, in the flesh there is no blood, in the members there is no movement? Do not the figures seem more spirit than flesh, more subdued, more absorbed, more immaterial, more steeped in the mystery of the faith? And we may see that this is the effect of technique, by the fact that the faces of Herod and his soldiers who massacre the Innocents, and also those of the executioners of the martyrs, are equally mild and pallid!

Thus the extreme simplicity of the Peruginesque composition though wonderfully measured and harmonious, is lost in effeminate sentiment.

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On the other hand, may not the isolated figures in the

beauty or character of their form and faces, of their attributes and their clothing, give credit to the fantasy, to the special imagination of the artist? And the care taken in perfecting them, does it not make one believe in the high æsthetic sense of the master? To put it briefly, should we not remember that the greatness of antique sculpture consisted above all in creating a single type and bringing it to perfection? The Virgin, the St. Sebastian, the St. John Evangelist, are not these, in Perugino, types that he has always known how to render more beautiful, subtle, restrained, and transmit them thus to his disciples, as the Greek Masters transmitted their æsthetic canons to generations of scholars? What superb figures in gesture and proportion are those holy hermits or cavaliers in the 'Assumption' called of Vallombrosa! What perfect harmony between form and sentiment in those of the 'Pala' (Altar Front) of Bologna! Well may one exclaim with T. Tasso:

> Or quai pensier, quai petti
> son chiusi a te, sant' Aura e divo Ardore?
> Inspiri tu dell' eremita i detti,
> e tu gl'imprimi ai cavalier nel core!

> What thoughts, O sacred Fire
> What soul is proof, blest Spirit, 'gainst thy arts?
> Thou didst the hermit with these words inspire,
> Thou didst impress them on the Warriors' hearts.
>
> *Tr. by* SIR J. K. JAMES.

In their sedateness they breathe calm; in their expression

mildness; the calm and the mildness of those who have the certainty of being heard by God or by Mary, she being not in an attitude of resignation and tenderness like the saints, but with the dignity of a woman who can intercede for grace and plead for salvation. Ah! the divine Madonna of Vienna, pure and high as she appears when painted by Raffael for the Granduca! And the Virgin in Sant' Agostino of Cremona absorbed in gentle thoughts; again the one of the tender sighing lips of the Crucifixion in Sta. Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi in Florence! Gazing at this last, one does not remember that this mouth is a veil of colour, is a stroke of the brush: one feels that behind it is a heart full of anguish.

In fact, all the sentiments of Perugino's figures, from ecstasy to sorrow, from mute contemplation to heroic posture, develop in an atmosphere of tranquillity. His art is so imbued with it that he can only paint gentle figures. Even Publius Scipio, Cincinnatus, Horatius Coclius according to him have an expression of pious resignation! Lucius Sicinius is more like a tender maiden, even though armed, and placed in the forceful pose that Andrea del Castagno gives to Pippo Spano, and Donatello to St. George of Orsanmichele!

Such expression is so much his second nature, that it was to no avail that he steeped himself in the realism of Florence. This, however, gave him force to instil greater beauty into Umbrian Art; but it does not alter the feeling that conversely succeeds in permeating even the art of

Lorenzo di Credi, of Fra Bartolomeo and of Andrea del Sarto.

It is evident that when the Makers of the Cathedral of Orvieto and the Venetian Signoria called for him (fortunately in vain) to paint figures howling in the depths of damnation and figures entangled in desperate battle, they did not comprehend his nature; and neither did Isabella d'Este when she desired from him that Combat of Love and Chastity, where the voluptuousness of the allegorical subject seems submerged in Holy Water!

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Perugino only draws and assimilates what will help him to create his ideal world, whether it be from Nature, the Schools or concrete examples.

In addition to the design, the simple composition, the grouping of figures, the expression of faces, three other elements are necessary to his world, Colouring, Architecture, Landscape.

The colouring of Perugino at his best period is something marvellous. Not even the admiring Florentine Masters equalled it. In some of his works he rivalled the Venetians, whom he had studied to good purpose. He had by nature a truly superior sense of chromatic harmony, that is to say of the value of tints and of the felicity of their contacts and contrasts. Few equalled him in reconciling the warm lights with the cold shadows, enlarging with such richness the tones of the flesh, in outlining and modelling with the brush. In this sense the portraits of Francesco

delle Opere and of the Vallombrosian monks are marvellous! Are they not comparable for vigour with the portraits of Antonello of Messina?

He dares to oppose the opacity of tempera to the brilliancy of enamel, a strict unity in the laying on of colours to a slight imposition of half-tones; the quietness of a mild languor to ecstatic vibrations, ever adapting the colour in various ways to his conception of the subject painted, to the character of the figures and to their sentiment. And what was rare in those days, he paints the landscape in accordance. In Italian painting the sense of locality comes late. There are painters of that century who depict with loving accuracy behind their figures, a country-side rich in leaves, flowers, rocks, water, castles, ruins, under a luminous sky flecked with white clouds, and with every sort of bird: a landscape gracious and pleasing, but without that mysterious expression which makes it participate in the scene represented. It is the great glory of Perugino to have felt, as Giovanni Bellini and a few others have done, the psychological value of the landscape. But one must acknowledge that the Umbrian country alone could lead him to this discovery, and nothing more surely than the Trasimene Lake, from whence is born the Peruginesque landscape. How often must Pietro as a boy have climbed up the mountains to the north of Castel della Pieve to see this expanse of water—now azure, now tender green, now silver!

Lake Trasimene is suffused with religious mystery. It

PORTRAIT OF PINTORICCHIO BY HIMSELF: FROM THE FRESCO AT SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE DI SPELLO
(*Photo. Alinari*)

MADONNA BY BONFIGLI: FROM THE PAINTING
IN THE PICTURE GALLERY AT PERUGIA
(*Photo. Alinari*)

has not the gay splendour of the Lombard lakes, nor the agitated and severe grandeur of Garda. The hills round Trasimene seem to be kneeling in prayer, the islands might be altars, and thus felt St. Francis in his penitential retreat: the opposite towers of Castiglione and Passignano are his sentinels. Those shores have also heard the crash of the furious onslaught of Hannibal overtaking the fugitives of Caius Flaminius:—the waters must have received the blood of many Romans, but now once more they contemplate the sky in placid silence.

Thus in the backgrounds of Perugino, the greater part is given to the sky, now clear as the dawn, now of an almost nocturnal blue, now rosy as at vespers. And the vision of Trasimene is always in his mind and in his works; be it that he narrows it as a river in a valley, or enlarges it as a marine horizon, or adorns its castles and villages with cupolas and spires; be it that he gives the lightness of the acacia to the powerful oaks. It is always Trasimene, now seen in full from an open bank, or between two slopes, or from behind the pillars of a Temple or the dark rafters of the Holy Manger; always Trasimene shining like a blade of steel, or dense with a mystic light; Trasimene which fades away and melts into the sky, giving a sense of the infinite which is true religion; it is Trasimene, an open space in the land of Umbria, where one may contemplate the sky, even when kneeling in prayer; it is Trasimene, the light and poetry of a land of saints, which, but for a mistaken moment, a fierce soldier thought to vanquish. Wherever

he might be, Perugino never forgot this enchanting view, which he had known in his early years. Thus his landscape brings with it a note of sweet nostalgia—which in its turn is a sense of love and of devotion; there he put his saints on the banks and hills of his lake; there he made the angel of the Annunciation appear; there he raised the Manger; there he placed Jesus a Babe, baptized Him as a Man, crucified Him and depicted His descent from the Cross. There he put to sleep the apostles in the 'Transfiguration', and dazzled the eyes of the soldiers in the 'Resurrection', there portrayed the Apollo-like nakedness of St. Sebastian, and the parched and emaciated St. Jerome; there made the Virgin appear to St. Bernard in the quiet dawn; hallowing always with the splendour of his art those waters and those hills which St. Francis had sanctified with sorrow and with prayer.

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Some may ask how it happens that such pure sentiment, such gentle expression, can agree with the warlike spirit which was present in Umbria, actually during the Renaissance rather than in the Middle Ages, and which reached manifestations of unheard-of cruelty; how could the plant of mysticism flourish from the soil that gave birth to such a number of 'captains of adventure'? Indeed was not Don John of Austria at Lepanto surprised to find a true legion of Eugubians? Many have asked how such deep religious feeling could issue from Perugino, who was a man without faith, who did not believe according to Vasari 'in the immortality

of the soul, indeed with words becoming his perfidious brain, obstinately refused every good way'. It would be pleasing to descant on the contrast between the materialism of the man and the religious ardour of his work, because one perceives in nearly all the 'Lives' of Vasari that he shows the psychology of the artist with a touch of his own, often demonstrated to be false: a touch, so to speak 'of manner'. However, one finds a certain confirmation of his words in the fact that Perugino was buried in unconsecrated ground, without perhaps considering that he died in time of Plague, when burials were all made in great haste, without prayer, without tapers, after a death agony without help, or comfort or absolution. Neither does one consider that there are documents saying that Perugino had twenty years before, provided for his tomb in the church of the Annunziata in Florence, and that the Augustinians were prepared to receive and keep his body in their church of Perugia, when fresh wars and deadly contagions disposed of this pious thought. But if in Umbria flourished the prickly thistle of combat and the poisonous hemlock of treachery, may one not also say that the roses of St. Francis and the lilies of St. Clare flourished equally? Is not piety perhaps greater when and where sorrow is deeper, love larger where hatred is more fierce, prayer stronger when and where blasphemy is more powerful?

Does not the spirit of the Saint of Assisi develop when violence is more bitter? Is not one reason of his divine mission of humility and good to be found in the cruelty

of others? And from the actual soul of the populace, frenzied and ravaged in the struggle for life between the many conflicts of their lords, we find the gentle hope, gradually becoming legend, that the love of a youth and a maiden of two opposing families should put an end to hatred and bloodshed. Juliet Capulet, Imelda Lambertazzi, Dianora dei Bardi, are not these sweet images inspired by art, the outcome of good as opposed to ferocity? And are not these saintly figures of Perugino animated by an Umbrian spirit against the inhuman fighting that devastated his country?

There were even found men daring enough to hang in the churches those flags which had waved at the head of the opposing factions howling bloodshed and death, and these standards were put side by side with the banners of the humble confraternities. One chronicler tells us 'there were so many that they touched each other, because when the body was buried the flags were unfurled above'. But the brave spirit of Fra Roberto rose and cried 'that it is not honourable nor good to keep flags in church, and he who puts them there commits mortal sin'. And they were removed, and only remain to this day the holy banners that Umbrian painting produced, to express and show forth the glory of God and of the Virgin.

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Few studios of great artists were so frequented by pupils and assistants as that of Perugino (I only remember those of Pintoricchio and Raffael); few artists equalled him in

MADONNA AND SAINTS: FROM A PAINTING BY FIORENZO DI LORENZO (*Photo. Anderson*)

MADONNA: FROM A PAINTING BY BARTOLOMEO CAPORALI, IN THE UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE
(*Photo. Alinari*)

the inspiriting of men for the greater extension of Italy and marked a more visible advance. His works for Cremona and Pavia, for Bologna and Fano, for Florence and Rome, as soon as they appeared, awoke such admiration that the echo can still be traced in Lombardy, in Emilia, in Romagna, in the Marches, in Tuscany, and in Latium.

All is calm and sweetness and serenity in the life of Perugino, so is it in his art; one can foresee for him a peaceful old age, encircled by fame and respect, then Fate begins to change measure. In part the fault is his own. Being unable to make up his mind to refuse orders and fulfil them, he descends to a manual, hasty, industrial art, and also abandons to his pupils much of his work,—these pupils far inferior to his early ones, Raffael and Pintoricchio. And now he repeats and weakens the same figures, having recourse to old designs, turning back to his early cartoons, abandoning his own thought to inertia.

He distracts himself with public offices which take time and energy: his mind is exhausted, his eye weakened; his strong colouring degenerates into insipidity, the forms are less precise, the faces lose expression. His pupils desert him, unless like Raffael in the Vatican, they supplant him.

In the meantime arise on every side the greatest artists that mankind has known; artistic souls in travail thirsting to overcome the most arduous problems of art, and to create their world of beauty, splendour and thought: Leonardo, the sovereign genius who attempts everything and overcomes all with inspiration that is science, with a form that is

poetry; Michael Angelo, who in the Sistine Chapel chants a poem of sorrow and of prophecy in powerful imagery; Raffael who in the Stanze harmonizes the highest aspiration of philosophy and of faith; Titian who combines the brilliance of his Cadore with that of the glorious city of the sea; Correggio girding himself to launch into the Cupola of Parma the tumultuous joy of his angels.

'Poor Perugino, what becomes of thy art compared with that of these giants? The painter of Popes, of Princes, of the Signoria, already admired in Rome, in Florence, in Venice, thou must now take once more the road of thine own country and become a little provincial painter! Trasimene no longer glows before thy eyes but appears grey under a dismal sky!'

The spring of 1523 finds him humbly working in the silence of Fontignano, when he is overcome by Plague, and dies. The flame which was so brilliant on the hills, is extinguished. And a few months later, the light of Luca Signorelli fades away on the heights of Cortona,—he who had transmitted the best of his art to Michael Angelo, as Perugino had done to Raffael.

VI. PINTORICCHIO

PINTORICCHIO

FRANCESCO MATARAZZO, the old chronicler, after having indulged in hearty praise of Perugino, adds that 'at the same time there was living in Perugia another master called by many the Pintoricchio, who was the second in the art of Painting as Master Pietro was the first; and as second master, he had no equal in the world; thus in our city were born men, great and dignified in this art, as also in other faculties and crafts'. Giorgio Vasari, on the contrary, considers Pintoricchio much 'aided by fortune but not endowed with power', and wrote but a brief account of his life, thus inducing the historians of art to neglect him for a long period.

Accurate criticism has righted this judgment. It is not true that Pintoricchio is, after Perugino, the second painter 'without equal in the world', but he is, after Perugino, the second Umbrian painter. It is not true that he is endowed with little power, but it is however certain that he had not much idealism of form, nor profundity of feeling. He was above all, a decorative painter, fine in execution, rich (but not always harmonious) in colouring; a 'princely' painter, but without the spirit of psychological analysis, and thus he has not launched into the field of art any one figure that is still celebrated for its wonder of aspect and of life. For the magnificence of his ornamentation, of landscape, of architecture, of multitudes, he embraces the richest qualities developed in Umbrian painting during the century, combining and bringing them to a height really worthy of a

great Court. But precisely for this reason, his 'courtly' art, as we may term it, conceals little heart under the wealth of the brilliant raiment!

At the time of his birth (probably 1454) there were several notable painters in Perugia, the oldest being Benedetto Bonfigli and Bartolomeo di Segnolo (del Caporale). There were also Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, Pietro di Galeotto, and Perugino, who surpassed them all. In Foligno the heart of Umbria, Mesastris, the humble and pleasing imitator of l'Alunno, was working, and in Gubbio we find various followers of the old master Nelli, amongst them Jacopo Bedi and di Nanni. These painters were not all of equal value, nor indeed of the same type, although working close to one another and in the same pleasant land. Bonfigli was an eclectic of little sensibility, gathering the elements of his art from various Tuscan and Umbrian sources. He limited his personal initiative to certain tricks of gaudy elegance, accurate however in a special way, in realistic reproduction of buildings, as one may see in the frescoes of the Palace in Perugia and in the Banner of San Bernardino. Bartolomeo del Caporale, whose name appears in the register of painters until 1442, shows himself influenced by Benozzo Gozzoli and the Sienese, but he afterwards becomes strictly Umbrian preparing for the later art of Pintoricchio. Another painter appears for a moment in the history of art, Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, and if we believe that the delightful little stories of the life of San Bernardino in the Perugia Gallery are his, we must consider him a great master; but

the concensus of opinion now is that they must be attributed to Perugino in his early days, aided by his pupils, chief of whom is Pintoricchio. In this case the value of Fiorenzo's painting must be judged only by the works we know to be authentic, and therefore he passes to a lower class by reason of his crude colouring, uncertain drawing and rugged forms. Pietro di Galeotto was a painter evidently held in high esteem by his contemporaries, because to him, among other important works, was entrusted the Altar Front (Pala) for the Chapel of the Priors, now in the Vatican Gallery. At his death it was still incomplete, and was finished by Perugino in 1483. At the same time l'Alunno was imitating the works of Benozzo, so much admired in Montefalco, and to a less degree, those of Crivelli, who was painting in Piceno. But Galeotto, in his provincial simplicity, possessed a talent denied to Bonfigli, that is to say sentiment, sometimes even reaching caricature! In him too the rural sketch is enlarged, and is studded with figures in anecdotal groups; the decoration is enriched with delicate details in the frame and predella and in architectural backgrounds, showing a love of ornament such as was also occasionally reached by Mesastris, both these painters being prior to Crivelli, Nelli and Gentile da Fabriano. But, as we have already seen, Perugino emerges superior to all these artists, for his depth of expression, beauty of form and colour, and above all, for the perfect harmony of his art with the character of Umbria.

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It is probable that Pintoricchio first studied in the school of Bartolomeo del Caporale, official painter to the rich and powerful abbey of San Pietro. He was esteemed by his fellow-citizens, and amongst other important works he executed the panel-picture (now lost) for the Cappella del Verde in the cathedral. Certainly there is a distinct likeness between the known works of Bartolomeo and the early ones of Pintoricchio, and we are told that the latter was in correspondence with Gian Battista del Caporale for some years.

As soon as Pintoricchio perceived the proof of Perugino's painting reinvigorated by Florentine contact, he did not hesitate to work as his apprentice, first helping him in the panels of St. Bernardino and then in the Sistine frescoes. And thus there was truth in Vasari's words that 'Pintoricchio in his first youth worked many things with his master Pietro of Perugia'. The temperaments of the two artists were, however, essentially different. The one simple and serene, the other dignified and decorative; for this reason Perugino in his collaboration with the younger man, recognizes that this very difference makes the evolution of the work richer and more worthy. And what was actually their procedure? The tendency of Perugino was always to mitigate the pomp of the older Umbrian painters, that of Pintoricchio was to augment it; therefore if one sought for humility and feeling, the other looked for more sparkling and superficial elements. Behold him therefore in the chapel of the Trinci observing the gilded vaulting of

ST. CATHERINE BY PINTORICCHIO: FROM THE FRESCOES OF THE APPARTAMENTI BORGIA IN THE VATICAN
(*Photo. Alinari*)

ALEXANDER VI BY PINTORICCHIO: FROM THE FRESCOES OF THE APPARTAMENTI BORGIA IN THE VATICAN
(*Photo. Alinari*)

Ottaviano Nelli, and the rich tunic with which the Eugubian painter dressed the Infant Jesus; and the sumptuousness of the golden stuffs of Gentile da Fabriano. Pintoricchio notices at once the accuracy of Bonfigli's buildings and his manner of adorning raiment with golden spangles; again the cherubs upholding a coat-of-arms beloved by l'Alunno. In fact, it is not the internal feeling which interests him, but the effect of external pageantry. And as years advance this ostentation attracts him more, perhaps because it better pleases his patrons, and therefore he sacrifices ideality of form, if not the mystic sweetness which comes to him from the Schools, becoming poorer in spirit as he paints richer raiment.

In the unhappiness of his domestic life and the moral pusillanimity with which he tolerates the actions of a perverse and corrupt wife, we may find a reason for his desiring to produce such magnificence of festal aspect, and a secret and unconscious need to express himself in joyous and sumptuous design.

An old chronicler describes him as of 'mean appearance', whence his nickname 'Pintoricchio' and says he was also called 'Sordicchio' because he was deaf; and a Tuscan writer reveals the liaison of his wife Grania with a soldier of the Sienese Guard, to whom later she actually marries her own daughter. On the other hand, we see Pintoricchio timid and patient at his work, even when brought in contact with the most dissolute and cruel men of his age, from Alexander VI to Julius II, from Cesare Borgia to

Pandolfo Petrucci. Imperious and strong as they may be, Pintoricchio is still 'a little mind in a little body', never permitting himself any opinion on the crimes that his employers might meditate and commit, whilst he was engaged in shedding gaiety with gold and vivid colours.

Cardinals, princes and popes merely considered Pintoricchio an artificer prompt in rendering their dwellings magnificent. They did not molest him if he turned to their adversaries, nor particularly honour him for his services to themselves. Even the terrible Cesare Borgia writing of him to Alfani in October 1500, says 'whom we have always loved for his virtues, and we have again engaged him in our service'.

The fate of the Borgias approaching, Pintoricchio goes to work for their two most bitter enemies—Lorenzo il Magnifico and Julius II. Amongst artists he must have been one of the most timid, and during his last stay in Rome, he must have felt himself crushed by the knowledge that the fresh talents of Raffael and Michael Angelo, of Peruzzi and Bramante, were already at work.

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Strangely enough, some have thought that the rich and pompous art of Pintoricchio in his early period, proves that he had been in Rome at the Papal Court before he went there with Perugino.

We have seen how pictorial pomp is instilled into the temperament of the master; we have seen how he drew from the old local artists as much as would satisfy his

mind. But was not Perugia herself able to nourish him? Was she not the conspicuous city amongst the many beautiful ones of Italy, partly because of her natural surroundings, overlooking the valley of the Tiber, and with five or six chains of mountains fading away into the horizon even to Monte Amiata? Was she not then renowned both for her artistic and civic festivities?

There was no lack of learned men ready and willing to lay their humanistic culture at the feet of art, and there were numerous occasions when they could admire a brilliant show of costume in gorgeous celebrations.

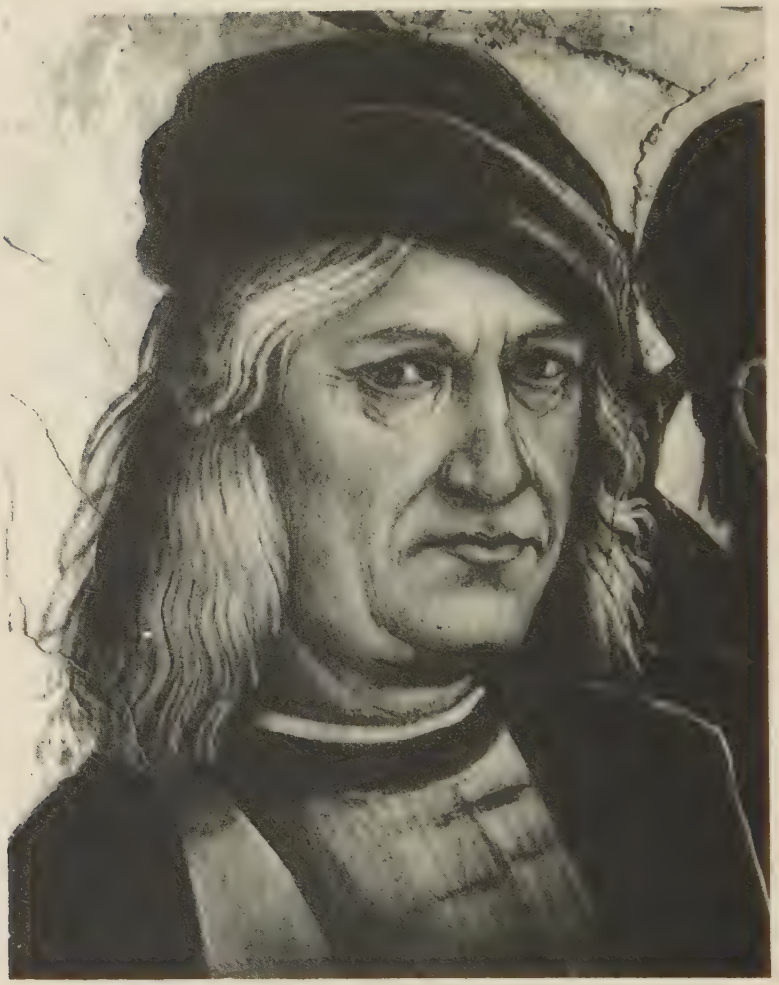
The early years of Pintoricchio were happy ones for his country. A year or so before he left it in 1479, he might have felt some fear when the Florentines made a nocturnal assault on Porta Sant' Angelo, but it was easily repulsed. The great troubles, when the Oddi and the Baglioni made the streets run with blood, took place later when he was already in Rome. On the contrary, we read that 'The Ten, having neither war without, nor discord within, attended to the good government of their citizens, keeping the people in plenty and enlarging the town both with public and with private buildings'. And if we consider the times, we must be struck by the care for the improvement of the city and the custody of its most ancient parts. In 1475 Biordo degli Oddi gave orders 'that no one who had a house near the walls of the city, should touch or move one stone from these walls, because verily, for the greatness and magnificence of the city and for the quality of the walls

themselves they are very remarkable and worthy of being preserved for ever; and as there are many who have houses above the walls and adjacent to them, if any one should have taken stones for their own use, they should be obliged within six months to restore the wall to its former state with the same stones, at their own expense'. Hardly a year later, he enjoined 'that certain stretches of wall, which in the higher vaulting of the houses project with no little deformity and impediment to the air of the streets, should be pulled down, especially those which are round about the piazza'. In 1479 the Signoria expected 'to put in order nearly all the public and important ways of the city, in those places where there was most need: and they made many new cisterns, wells and public fountains, with many other things suitable to the ornament and greatness of their city'.

And thus in Perugia the worship of the beautiful increased, and for this reason many eminent persons visited the town, who by reason of their processions and all the feasting with which they were honoured, gave much artistic pleasure to the populace. Pintoricchio, revelling in such pomp, was able to be present at these periodical ceremonies of the Installation of the Magistrates, and many other pageants of the time, and he always used his opportunities to introduce into his brilliant frescoes portraits of the great men he had seen.

When Pintoricchio was fifteen, the Emperor Frederick arrived at Perugia with seven hundred horses, and with a

LA MADONNA DELLA PACE: FROM A PAINTING BY PINTORICCHIO, AT SANSEVERINO
(*Photo. Alinari*)



PORTRAIT OF SIGNORELLI BY HIMSELF: FROM THE FRESCOES IN ORVIETO CATHEDRAL (*Photo. Anderson*)

great number of ambassadors, both from princes and republics; he remained two days, and was presented with two horses, covered with gold brocade. Two years afterwards, another important procession took place, when Borso d'Este passed through the city with five hundred horses, one hundred and thirty mules (many of them caparisoned with purple velvet and gold brocade), and with gilt and silver arms in the charge of twelve pages. After these followed doctors and gentlemen splendidly attired, and servants holding on leash one hundred and fifty dogs, and fifty falcons; everything in fact making such a spectacle of magnificence, that even before the frescoes of Pintoricchio, we see traces of the courtly show in the panel-pictures describing the legend of San Bernardino. And Pintoricchio also took part in the celebrations in honour of the 'Saints of the Gates and Regions' in 1471; then the streets were decorated and sumptuous suppers and dances took place; the following year Oddo Baglioni at his own cost, entertained Rengardo of Comerino, and again later, Madonna Costora, daughter of Braccio Fortebraccio.

And thus the city abandons herself on every hand to the felicity of a spacious and elegant life, accepting with alacrity all the beauty that the Renaissance showers upon her. However, even there, sumptuary laws seem necessary and in the same year 1472, Ruggiero dei Ranieri, head of the Magistrates, issues these laws, recognizing (partly from the threatening counsels of Fra Gian Battista) 'How much harm in the city of Perugia is done by the sumptuous

dressing of the women, and the excessive dowries that by this reason they use for costumes'.

Again a few years later we find Bernardino da Feltre preaching with fervour and fame equal to that of Savonarola, and obliging the women to moderate and doff their ornaments: then having constructed a wooden castle, he made them fill it with 'objects of vanity' and set fire to it.

But the conflagration of all these objects of 'vice and of levity' did not prevent the Baglioni indulging, shortly afterwards, in a marriage ceremony of fabulous luxury; nor did the severe sermon reach its scope of distracting art from reproducing it. Painter and citizen alike vied with each other untiredly in the desire to furnish each in his turn the elements of beauty and of pleasure.

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The passion of Pintoricchio for richness and splendour naturally increased with his years, and it was probably intensified by the wish of those who desired his work. In the Sistine frescoes which he painted in collaboration with Perugino, the vast and vigorous landscapes reveal themselves as assuredly his. In fact, whilst criticism varies in attributing one or other figure to Pintoricchio, there is no hesitation in assigning to him the important varied backgrounds in the 'Journey of Moses and Zipporah' and of 'The Baptism of Christ'.

He does not paint the sweet 'pure' country of Perugino, of simple lines, and mountains descending into lakes and valleys, of which we have often spoken, nor the mournful

solitude of Trasimene. His views are those of immense gardens and parks, rich with every sort of plant and every kind of rock, pierced through by galleries and surmounted by graceful castles or little churches. These are regions of delight, where everything (mountain, house, foliage) is sprinkled with gold, where the trees are not stalwart oaks, or dark ilex, but waving palms and fir-trees clipped to a cone; or else they may be flexuous cypresses and superb 'trees of Paradise'.

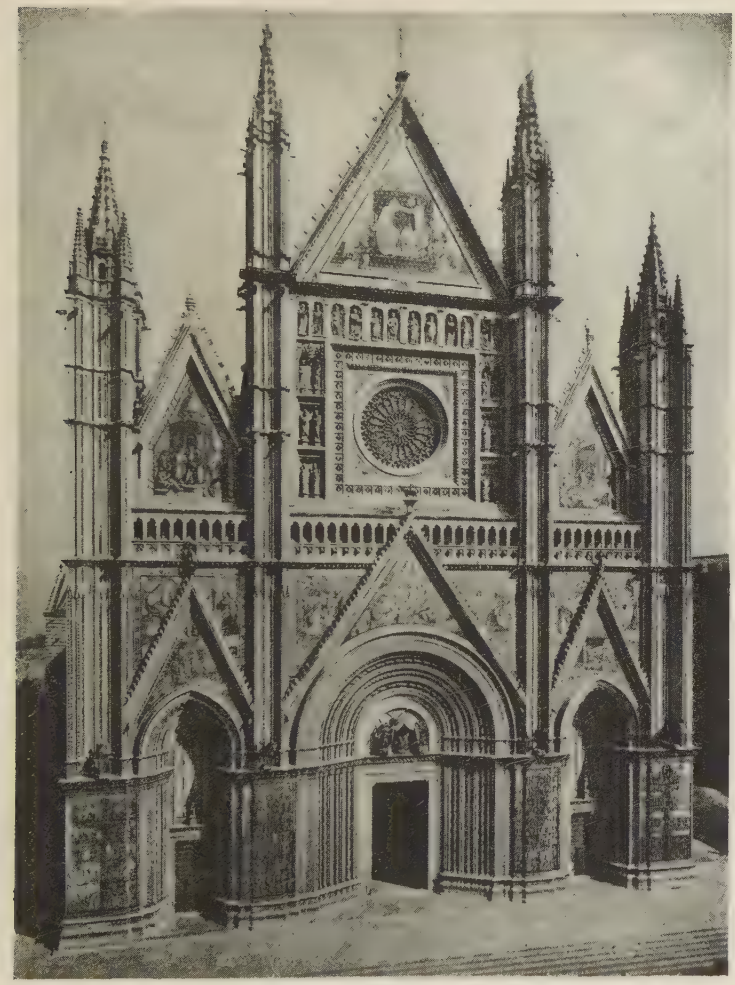
Pintoricchio does not depict huts and ruins, but cities outlined by rich towers and grand buildings, such as the Colosseum, the Pyramid of Caius Cestius, the Arch of Constantine, the Pantheon. The sky of Pintoricchio is flecked with clouds and rainbows and furrowed by large birds like falcons chasing wild duck. In fact it is a prospect of decorative effect, almost, if one may use the term, a 'courtly' landscape, and what confers elegance, at the same time removing confusion, is the delicate fourteenth-century grace of the forms.

The architecture of Pintoricchio is more rich than beautiful—compare, for instance, his temple in the Fresco of the 'Funeral of San Bernardino' in the Aracœli, with that of the 'Giving of the Keys' by Perugino, or with 'The Marriage of the Virgin' by Raffael: it is easy to see the inferiority in taste and design! Consider the heaviness and awkwardness of St. Barbara's tower in a lunette of the Appartamenti Borgia! We must acknowledge that Pintoricchio is a feeble painter of perspective: he only knew its

elementary rules, and even those he applied with indecision. It was in vain, as far as he was concerned, that Pier della Francesca, Mantegna, Melozzo da Forlì had attempted and often resolved the problems of perspective, figurative as well as architectural. In the Library of Siena Cathedral he is incapable of reconciling the perspective of the allotment of pillars and arches with that of the stories painted on them, so much so that the antagonism produces a sense of intuitive displeasure. In the vaulting of Sta. Maria del Popolo in Rome, Pintoricchio follows the example of the Giottesque painters in stretching out on a flat surface the niches with the figures of the four Doctors of the Church.

On the other hand, it is impossible not to recognize the justice of Vasari's observations when he says that 'Bernardino was much in the habit of decorating his pictures with ornaments in relief covered with gold, for the satisfaction of persons who understood but little of such matters, to the end that they might have a more showy appearance, a thing which is most unsuitable to painting. Having depicted a story from the life of St. Catherine in the above named apartments, he executed the triumphal arches of Rome therefore in relief, and painted the figures in such a manner that the objects which should diminish are brought more prominently forward than those which should be larger to the eye, a grievous heresy in our art.'

'Grievous heresy!' are words really too harsh, but we must admit that the method is illogical and therefore ungrateful. One observes it less in the populous scene of



FAÇADE OF ORVIETO CATHEDRAL
(*Photo. Alinari*)

FIGURES FROM THE PREACHING OF ANTICHRIST: FROM THE FRESCOES BY SIGNORELLI IN ORVIETO CATHEDRAL
(*Photo. Anderson*)

St. Catherine because as the reliefs receive their light from the front, they do not throw shadows or projections on the figures which ought to be presented on the first plane; but this does offend the eye in the lunette of St. Barbara. The elevated door-post of the tower, for instance, throws its shadow on the shoulder and elbow of a soldier; it confuses the position relative to the perspective, making it recede even to the wall of the tower, instead of taking its natural place in front.

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It is a singular fact that with the advance of age and practice, Pintoricchio does not refine his taste and improve his form; on the contrary as he proceeds gradually in his brilliant decoration, he seems to give less thought to the excellence of design and the fusion of the colouring.

We find indeed that his great frescoes in Siena and in Sta. Maria del Popolo in Rome, both completed between 1505 and 1509, are not equal to those painted twenty years previously in the Aracœli.

In the latter church, he has not the mania for overburdening the compartments and the architecture with ornamentation and with gold; he does not strive after effect in the crowding of figures and in crudeness of colours, but he produces a pleasant harmony of composition, design and tints; a light, a simplicity, a widespread peace, almost as though the spirit of San Bernardino had directed the work, and with his modesty had curbed the art which in later days became intemperate.

But at that early epoch, Pintoricchio was nearer to the Peruginesque example, and perhaps also he felt himself touched by the humility of his patron saint. He may have been reading the story of San Bernardino's life, and have had a dim remembrance of hearing in his infancy, how his grandmother had heard the Saint preach from the outside pulpit of Perugia cathedral, and had seen him act as peacemaker in so many quarrels.

In the Aracœli also Pintoricchio paints the candelabra in chiaroscuro on a deep red ground, thus adding to the chromatic moderation in the scheme of decoration; but later on, finding this too mean, he breaks faith with simple light and shade and abandons himself to the grotesque. This triumph of the grotesque arises from the fact that painters penetrating into the dark recesses of the Golden House of Nero, discover and copy the ancient Roman ornamentation. The excavation taking place early in the pontificate of Alexander VI, was in time for Pintoricchio to avail himself of the study of the old Roman art, and introduce some of its rich designs into his scheme of decoration for the Appartamenti Borgia which he was then preparing.

The enthusiasm awakened in the artists of those days for the grotesque was equal to that felt by students of neoclassicism for the treasures of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

One of Leonardo's pupils tells us that men were so eager to copy the reliefs and designs, that they went all on fours into the caves and excavations, although 'these were full

of bats and toads'; they made sketches for applying the new art; came from far away and returned to their own country with this new decorative method, throwing on vault and ceiling branches, foliage, fruit. They painted figures of legendary monsters, garlands of leaves, symbols and signs of war and of labour, all varied and diversified, without either colour or design being the specific reason.

Luzo was known by the nickname of 'Morto da Feltre' because he remained underground all day, and only emerged in the evening, as from a sepulchre! The actual ornamentations received the name of grotesque, because they were discovered in 'grotte'. Benvenuto Cellini writes: 'In Italy we have various ways of painting foliage; the Lombards made beautiful leaves by drawing those of ivy and of bryony with beautiful turns and scrolls, which give much pleasure to the eye; the Tuscans and Romans for this kind are superior, because they use leaves of acanthus turning in divers manners; and in amongst the said leaves, there is room for some birds and various animals, all of which adds to the good taste. Wild flowers are also naturally employed, like those called snapdragon and thus also other flowers, accompanied with other beautiful fancies of these skilful artificers, which things are called, by those who know no better, "grotesques". These "grotesques" have acquired the name just lately, because they have been found in certain caverns of the earth in Rome, by the learned; which caves were formerly rooms, hot-houses, studios and such-like places. These learned men have

found the paintings in subterranean caves, by reason of the earth around having been raised to a higher level; and because the Roman vocabulary calls these caves "grottoes" therefore has come the name "grotesque". But this is not the right name, because as the ancients delighted in composing displays introducing goats, cows, horses, this medley gave rise to "mostri",[1] thus the artificers made this sort of picture with their foliage, and "mostri" is their proper name and not grotesques.'

Now, as far as it is possible to discover, Pintoricchio was the first artist in the Renaissance to make use of these 'grotesques', or 'mostri' as Cellini would have them called; and that was in his decoration of the Appartamenti Borgia, and it seems that the oldest document, in which the name 'grotesque' is used, is the order given to him in 1502 for the decoration of the Piccolomini Library.

Thus Pintoricchio gathered from the classical world what was most brilliant, most facile and most fantastic, but not the wonderful harmony of form and the noble moderation with which he tempered his decorative work.

. . . . . .

There is no doubt that the many orders for pictures and frescoes which Pintoricchio accepted, some of which had to be done in a brief space of time, made it necessary for him to employ assistants. For instance, there were no less than ten engaged in the Appartamenti Borgia. Undoubtedly Antonio del Massaro was one of these, and

[1] Arabesque is the nearest English equivalent.

probably Eusebio di St. Giorgio and Andrea di Aloigi were amongst the number. But if it is usually difficult to define the name and circumscribe the work of each collaborator, it is equally difficult to recognize the actual painting done by Pintoricchio himself. This, truly, even when not strictly beautiful, is always accurate and, one may also say, meticulous. However, the mania for immediate or external effect always distracts him from the spiritual investigation of those forms for which Perugino, in his early period, is so celebrated.

Even when painting portraits, and he has some fine ones, such as the 'Young Man' in the Dresden Gallery and that of Alexander VI in the Vatican, Pintoricchio feels himself more attracted by details of embellishment than the subject requires.

Such care does he devote to the landscape of the Dresden picture, as to make it more important than the figure, and such minuteness in the reproduction of every gem, every thread in the woven tissue of the Pope's mantle, that he can do no more for the head and the hands.

There are about forty pictures still existing by Pintoricchio, in which the decorative spirit is to be seen bounding exuberantly through the richness of the raiment, the importance of the background, and through the glory of gold resplendent on building and mountain. We must observe also that it is not only in paintings destined for his great patrons and for well-known cities that he uses such pageantry, but also for minor personages and for remote

places, such as Sanseverino. For that cathedral he painted a most charming 'Madonna' in 1489; this panel-picture gathers together in itself the best of Pintoricchio from the fineness of technique in design and colour to his finest conception of the human figure and landscape; and all is synthesized in one magnificent whole, in a twilight which is ethereal, almost unearthly. Contemplating this work we are led to believe that had Pintoricchio painted more in this manner, he would have been one of our great painters for grace, delicacy and comeliness, even if not actually in the first rank. But it was but seldom that he could be in solitary communion with his actual work, and generally he was preoccupied by being obliged to satisfy courtly requirements. And these rare occasions were all anterior to the period that we may call 'Borgiano', the period when his faces showed a sweetness which gradually changed into coldness, when his colour was diaphanous and opaline, instead of crude and audacious as we see it in the Library at Siena.

Thus, if the art of Perugino faded away in misery of form and colour, that of Pintoricchio died in the tumult of the one, and the harshness of the other. But for both, although from opposing causes, it was decadence.

VII. LUCA SIGNORELLI

THE DOOMED: FROM THE FRESCOES BY SIGNORELLI IN ORVIETO CATHEDRAL (*Photo. Alinari*)

DETAILS OF THE DAMNED: FROM THE FRESCOES BY SIGNORELLI
IN ORVIETO CATHEDRAL
(*Photo. Alinari*)

LUCA SIGNORELLI

THERE is an extraordinary difference between the painting of Perugino and that of Luca Signorelli, although they were born in neighbouring villages, grew up in the same schools and flourished at the same time. In the most felicitous periods of art, it may be noticed that artists, besides increasing in number and in power, appear with a more distinct personality, and in this way, each painter presents an essentially individual character. But when art is at a low ebb, it is monotonous and uninteresting. Forms may change their formula; colours their order, but yet everything is in the same style. The art of the day might be base, yet diversified; it is instead base and uniform.

Thus it was in the most turbulent centuries of the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century, painting underwent a transformation, thanks especially to Giotto, Cavallini and the Sienese School. The forms became more beautiful, the compositions more dramatic, the colouring more cheerful, but there was little variety either between the schools or between the painters themselves. Only with the Renaissance did this become remarkable.

Taking Florence alone, let us think of the spiritual and technical difference between Andrea del Castagno and Fra Angelico, between Paolo Uccello and Filippo Lippi, between Ghirlandaio and Botticelli! Or in Venice, consider how different are the two Bellini from Cima, from Carpaccio! Between Perugino and Signorelli we find

everything different, design, colour, composition, feeling! The first is simple and sweet, the second is wild and powerful. And yet both descended the hill in view of Trasimene, both wended their way to Arezzo, and were together in the school of the great Pier della Francesca, both went to Florence and together they frequented the art studios and contemplated the works of the great masters, from Andrea del Castagno and Angelico to those of Verrocchio and the Pollaiuoli; possibly they may have worked at the same picture, but whilst Perugino seemed to tune his soul to the sweet voice of Angelico, Luca di Cortona listened to the call of the masters more given to reality and movement, the greatest of whom, Donatello, left a superb legacy to his disciples and followers.

The formation of the style and feeling of Signorelli developed rapidly; he had no period of uncertainty and indecision. In his earliest works he is recognizable for his figures, characteristics and colour; from the beginning he appeared prophetically anxious to discipline his talents with the life, force and ardour necessary to lead him to the victory of Orvieto.

Sometimes we can trace a slight influence from other masters in his work, such as the glittering gold and ornate stuffs which bring to mind the Umbrian painters; in the panel painted for the Sernini of Cortona he shows his knowledge of the enlightened activity of Lorenzo Lotto; he reveals his sympathy for Leonardo in the Apostles of Loreto; in the Crucifixion of Morra he repeats the idea of

Pier della Francesca in the great forest of lances; but all these were fleeting recollections, hardly to be counted in the vast sea of his labour.

Signorelli was very soon aware that it was in direct study from life that he would find power to triumph over the problems before him, much more than in learning from the words of masters and copying what others had done. It would have been an evil day if he had contented himself with the knowledge of the nude up till then known to Art, or if he had not mastered the various movements of the body and if he had not intuitively perceived what was impossible to portray from the life owing to the fleeting expression.

Few of his drawings remain, yet he must have made thousands before he could reach the precision and assurance with which he delineated the human figure in his paintings with a terse and concise touch; and before he attained the accomplished anatomical knowledge which he reveals both in energetic action, in all foreshortening, and in repose and motion.

Such was his passion for the nude, that prior to working at Orvieto he not only made use of it in suitable pictures but also introduced it behind the portrait of a man, and in another case in a painting of the Virgin and Child, thus inspiring Michael Angelo for the circular picture of Angelo Doni.

Signorelli studied much beside the form; he really examined his characters, making the expression agree with

the subject, and with the age or quality of the figures represented; he was always careful to give ampleness of line, which might sometimes be rough and brutal but was more to his taste than the danger of becoming weak and languid. For this reason he did not only paint a strong figure as a type, or to exhibit muscle and gesture, but when he draped one, it was with flowing garments in large and solemn folds.

To some his colour has seemed crude and heavy, his flesh of a reddish hue, modelled on half tints of green toning into deep yellow is somewhat unpleasing, and his shade is often hard. But if this reproach be just for some easel-pictures, it is not so for his great frescoes. How would it be possible to relate the fearful tragedy of the end of the world with the smooth and clear palate of Pier della Francesca or the green-blue of Perugino? Luca, however, dramatized the actual colouring with deep insight; he rendered it capable of blazing ominously on the terrified faces of the doomed, and of shedding a livid light on the mire from which emerged the risen, or of expressing the woeful gloom of the earth.

He was also a great master in distributing masses of light and shade, creating the strong contrasts necessary for one who made his canvas so full of figures. With his chiaroscuro he carried light where the danger of confusion was threatened, using it with a frankness and daring only equalled by that of his draughtsmanship and of his lively fancy. For this reason he often disdained traditional

DETAILS OF THE BLESSED IN THE LAST JUDGMENT: FROM THE FRESCOES BY SIGNORELLI IN ORVIETO CATHEDRAL
(*Photo. Alinari*)

ETRUSCAN TOMBS, BELOW ORVIETO
(*Photo. Alinari*)

iconography, not only as regards individual figures, but also in his manner of rendering the scene.

Signorelli's imagination manifested itself in the composition of many pictures and in his scorn of repetition (a thing which never troubled Perugino!); he is seen free and strong in the frescoes of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, in those stories of St. Benedict, where the groups of white-robed monks are distributed with variety and rare equilibrium in contrast to the stronger colouring of the rest of the picture; when the attitude of the figures responds admirably to their feeling and the scene in which they participate. Notice, indeed, the flattering waiting-maids in the dark kitchen, who serve the monks intent on eating greedily against the order of their founder; notice the benign Saint who evangelizes the people of Cassino, or see him severely unmask to the surprise of the soldiers, the warrior who presents himself dressed as Totila! His figure perspective corresponds with that of his architecture in that he gradually decreases his figures towards the background. This is not done with the suddenness of Perugino, who makes his distant figures too small; this effect he commonly produces in his painting of the mountains, with the illusion that his first plane is succeeded by a background in which all distances are merged in one, so that the figures there distributed diminish by the doubly resultant perspective of distance and of depth.

One must not, however, imagine that Signorelli loved landscape as Perugino had done; he greatly preferred archi-

tecture to scenery, and gave so little space to the latter, that at times he did not allow it to appear at all!

For him, as for the greatest artists of all time, the human figure had absolute preëminence; for him landscape was merely an accessory or a description, whilst the human figure was drama, was tragedy. In this way also, he was the precursor of Michael Angelo.

In the Fine Arts, as in Poetry, landscape is necessary to define the surroundings, but it should be kept within reasonable limits, as in the ancient tragedies, as in the *Divine Comedy*, in *Orlando Furioso*, in Shakespeare's Plays; as in the Roof of the Sistine Chapel.

The power and fantasy of genius are revealed in the expression of beauty and of human passions, far more than in a descriptive background.

Thus, as the powerful genius of Luca Signorelli advances, he turns more and more to the compositions where the semblance of man and of his fateful companion occupy all his thought and his space. And his character becomes more vehement and impassioned, and the feelings that he expresses more powerful and dramatic, as his compositions become more tumultuous.

Now all is ready for his masterpiece—imagination, power of design and of brush—all is to be put forth for a work of which till then no one had dreamed. In the picture at Loreto of the Conversion of St. Paul, Signorelli had given some foretaste of what he would paint in the Last Judgment at Orvieto; in the studies of the nude he

had trained his eye and his hand to the great problems of anatomy and of movement; we see some trace of the demons leaping out from the Etruscan walls of his native Cortona in the vaulting at Monte Oliveto, and in the dome at Loreto we catch a glimpse of what his angels might be later on in the cathedral at Orvieto.

At this point in his career good fortune befalls him. At the beginning of the fifteenth century a large chapel dedicated to San Brizio was built, adjacent to the superb cathedral of Orvieto. Forty years later the idea arose that it would be well to decorate this chapel with frescoes by Fra Angelico. He did indeed begin the work, painting two divisions of the roof, but owing to the lack of funds, he went away, never to return. Two years later, Benozzo Gozzoli appeared, offering to complete the work begun by his master. He was allowed to paint a specimen, but it was judged unworthy. Another forty years passed before the Orvietani endeavoured once more to find an artist for the important work. Finally, in 1489, they invited Perugino to come to their city and make a contract. Ten years passed and he still had not appeared, notwithstanding many entreaties. He continued to procrastinate, and at last went to Perugia to paint the Sala del Cambio.

Once more the citizens of Orvieto are perturbed and are actually gathered together to discuss the tardy refusal of Perugino, when it is rumoured that Luca Signorelli, the painter from Cortona, is passing through their city; he is

already famous for his frescoes at Monte Oliveto and for many pictures.

I think of Luca Signorelli absorbed in the contemplation of the glorious cathedral of Orvieto. The 'Corporal', stained in Bolsena by the Divine Blood, is within, as jealously guarded as the heart in the body; but the vigorous pulse of faith gives life to all the members of the sacred edifice, 'like impulse kindled into outward flame'. Luca beholds the work of Lorenzo Maitani glowing in the sunshine, with cuspated portals, and the rose-window of snow-white tracery. The marbles are precious as ivory, the bronzes green as glowing emeralds, the mosaics sparkling as it were a flaming fire, and the wonderful vibrations produced by the whole touch and awaken the most varied sensations of our heart and of our deepest thought: and this because the marvellous architecture is light and music, history and prayer, is matter and is spirit.

Signorelli, while admiring the magnificent building as it is, has his mind saturate with the new and strange power that he feels himself able to wield in depicting the Last Judgment, in contradistinction to the ancient reliefs of the façade which show ingenuous indecision of form, mingled with exquisite beauty.

And now the hour has come! He accepts the work offered to him, the contract is made, and he begins to express his idea of the terrible theme which he had had in his mind, knowing that all the powers of his spirit and his studies have been converging to this great design.

ST. NICHOLAS OF TOLENTINO AND THE INNOCENT VICTIMS: A PANEL-PICTURE OF THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY, IN THE COLLECTION OF PROFESSOR SCHIFF, PISA

THE MIRACLE OF THE INNOCENT VICTIM: FROM THE FRESCO BY LO SPAGNA, AT SAN GIACOMO, NEAR SPOLETO
(*Photo. Alinari*)

It really seems that Fate had intervened towards the success of this masterpiece! Had Fra Angelico treated this great subject, it would have been with the same seraphic gentleness which we see in his 'Last Judgment' in San Marco in Florence, where he is paradisaical with the blessed, and mildly indulgent to the rejected. Benozzo Gozzoli would have painted it in a similar way, but without the lofty purity of his master's feeling; Perugino would have filled the walls with detached figures full of suavity; in other words he would have played the flute where reality required the blare of the trumpet. And we, admiring his wisdom, firmly believe that he would not undertake the work, realizing that he was incapable of the arduous task.

And thus we see Destiny bringing to Orvieto the one man in the world capable of creating a true masterpiece which is indeed one of the glories of Italian art. Had Destiny not intervened, Luca Signorelli might never have had occasion to show forth his genius, and the walls of the chapel might have remained whitewashed, or have been decorated . . . by the brothers Zuccari!

In the vaulting, Signorelli restrains himself in painting Apostles, Martyrs, Doctors, Virgins, partly it may be, on account of the limited space, partly to avoid discord with the earlier work done by Angelico. But on reaching the walls, he gives free play to his genius. Behold! before the destruction of this earth, Antichrist appears, and with the aid of the demon whispering in his ear, he preaches a false faith to the multitude, awaking in his hearers every ferocious

instinct and base desire. His face, for greater deception, resembles that of Jesus Christ, but there is something sinister in his looks. Deceitful rather than pious is the inclination of the head, hearkening to the suggestions of the demon.

In the listening crowd there is a tumult of gesture and of feelings. There are those who believe in the false prophet, those who distrust him, some who would contest his assurances, others who would refute him with the sacred writings; some who uphold him; others are throwing gold at the foot of the pedestal on which he stands, amongst the pile of broken church ornaments. We see men of the people, their shirts torn off by the rough crowd, young nobles richly arrayed, aged crones and young mothers with their babes; bold cavaliers and terrified nuns; women with violent gestures; and friars, their faces full of dismay, and amongst them, the man who knows the realms 'Beyond the Tomb', who understands diabolic depravity: Dante. But the Antichrist expects to convince the people with miracles and to alarm them with torments. At the foot of the Temple on the one side he raises to life a dead man lying on a bier; on the other he has a youth beheaded who had dared to oppose him. Lower down amongst a heap of slain, an executioner pulls the halter round the neck of a poor wretch, who, yelling, tries to avoid strangulation, a group which has no equal in art for its terror. But for the Antichrist himself the hour of punishment is approaching. Raised in the air, he encounters the angel of his doom who hurls him to the ground amid the confusion of his followers,

who in their turn are assailed by flames: a tumult of men overturned, wounded, slain, of shrieking women, of rearing horses. Marvellous as is the grouping of the crowd in flight, it is surpassed by the challenge of the angel's figure descending from heaven upon the false prophet, sword in hand.

In the spacious arch is depicted the End of the World: the solemn Prophet, the severe Sibyl are figures of a grandeur equal to Michael Angelo, whom they anticipate; there are temples shaken by an earthquake, the sun and moon obscured, the people fleeing in disorder during a rain of fire with every possible gesture of hideous terror and desperation. But the world once shaken from its axis, and humanity destroyed, we now reach the hour of the Resurrection. Amongst myriads of little angels, appear two of Herculean form, who lower the long clanging tubes with the oriflamme inflated by the wind like standards in a battle. The risen issue, not from tombs and tumuli and chasms, but from compact companies, unchanged by earth. The skeletons already freed give signs of rising; those half-imprisoned press the ground with their elbow to free themselves; in another part some emerge with their leering skulls. Others are erect, already half-clothed with their muscles: and others show 'the ancient majesty of flesh and bone'. Nearly all are gazing at the golden glory of the sky, astounded at the clangour of the divine trumpets.

After the Resurrection comes the Final Judgment. In front is the fantastic entanglement of the damned and the

sharp fight with the devils, some of whom crash from the sky, thus overthrowing other reprobates; one carrying on his back a handsome courtesan. The three Archangels covered with shining cuirasses, advance proud and fierce from above, on the right. Each sinner has his demon, green as a serpent: that demon perhaps who has been beside him all his life tempting him to evil, and who now strikes him, or lashes or bites or tries to strangle him; whereas in the grand scene of the elect, a superb cohort of angels descends towards the Blessed, to crown them with garlands, to strew flowers, to gladden them with music, all hands being raised in an attitude of prayer, with the spirit and the gaze turned towards God.

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Fresco, which is one of the most wonderful fields of activity in Italian art, makes an important stride with the Orvieto paintings.

Nations, other than Italy, have had great painters: Spain glories in Velasquez and Murillo: Belgium in Van Eyck and Rubens; Holland in Rembrandt and Franz Hals. Not one amongst them, however, has understood this vast painting of wall spaces. With us it is indissolubly allied with our monuments; in the gay, sunny Roman houses, and in the dark catacombs; in the great churches thus filled with angels and saints, and in the palaces where it lends emphasis to the liberal spirit of the Communes; in the sepulchral chapels where we mourn the dead, and in the feudal castles where force and chivalry find cheerful voice. The history

of the fresco is almost entirely that of our art. Giotto, 'mercè sua', expresses the sweet Franciscan legend in Florence and at Assisi, and in the Arena chapel at Padua he tells the story of the life of Christ; in Florence the birth of the Renaissance lays the foundation of new beauties in the Brancaccio chapel through Masolino and Masaccio; and the Blessed Angelico, chanting his sweet psalms, passes through the cells of San Marco. Again with fresco Filippo Lippi honours in Prato the martyrdoms of St. John and St. Stephen, and in Spoleto the Coronation of the Virgin. In six different cities of Italy, the industrious Benozzo Gozzoli recounts stories from the Bible, as well as the deeds of St. Francis and St. Augustine: whilst the legend of the Cross, linking the mystery of the first death to the redemptive tragedy of the death of Jesus, is shown forth with fresh profound insight by Pier della Francesca. Then follows the forceful Mantegna in whom the admiration of the antique is mingled with modern sensibility, and as also in Melozzo da Forlì, the knowledge of perspective corresponds with liberal geniality of form.

Whilst Pintoricchio, decorating with lofty stateliness the Vatican galleries, seems desirous of covering with wondrous foliage the moral abyss of the ferocious Borgias, Domenico Ghirlandaio celebrates the beauty and grace of Florentine life, only sad at not being able to fresco the entire circle of the city walls!

Raffael, Michael Angelo and Correggio then enter the arena of art. In the Sala della Segnatura Raffael succeeds

in accomplishing the highest illustration of artistic, humanistic and religious sentiment, paraphrasing the conception of Pico della Mirandola 'Philosophy seeks Truth, Theology finds her, Religion owns her.' Michael Angelo, great above all others, narrates in the Sistine Chapel the mysteries of the Bible and the fearsome destinies reserved for mankind, with a truly Dantesque spirit. Correggio exalts the merry blitheness of the magic dance of his saints and angels, caring not that the Constable of Bourbon passes beneath the walls of Parma with the fury of the barbarians pressing onwards to the sack of Rome.

And with these outstanding men appears an infinite host of others, from laborious Lombardy to austere Latium, from the manual artificers of Roman antiquity even to Tiepolo, inexhaustible creator of scenic splendour.

The glory of fresco-painting is denied by no one to Italy; not even by those who refuse to recognize the magnificence of Roman Art, and its derivative descent from the East, under pretext of a criticism which is, and ever has been, merely the jealousy of enemies against the greatness of Italy, past and present.

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The immense work of Signorelli aroused stupendous admiration. Begun in 1499, while Plague was ravaging the whole of Umbria, and terrifying phenomena of great storms and tempests and inundations were taking place, he completed it in 1501. Thus it literally closed the fifteenth century and opened the era of colossal genius. The

soul of Michael Angelo was glowing with preparation for that Last Judgment, which compares with the fresco of Signorelli as *Orlando Furioso* with *Orlando Innamorato*. Even so Ariosto in his poem follows the subject that Bojardo has constructed with its plots, episodes and characters, direct outcome of the Arthurian and Carlovingian epic cycle.

With Signorelli as with Buonarroti we admire the daring, the sculptural power, the fire of composition, the passion for the form and predominance of the human figure.

In May, 1518, Michael Angelo wrote to the Captain of Cortona asking him to constrain Luca to repay eighty julios,[1] lent to him five years previously on two separate occasions, Signorelli declaring that he had already discharged the debt.

Luca was of an honest and true nature, generous and affectionate with his family and friends, he only cared for money in so far as it allowed him to live worthily, and to do good. His own town holding him in the highest esteem elected him nine times to be Prior, and an equal number did he serve on the General Council and on that of The Eighteen.

When quite a child Giorgio Vasari had the good fortune to see him, and thus described the event, after mentioning the 'Conception', painted by Luca for Arezzo; 'This work was carried from Cortona to Arezzo on the shoulders of men belonging to the Company of St. Jerome; and Luca, old as he was, wished to come and put up the picture, and

[1] Julio, a Tuscan coin worth twelve cents.

also he desired to see his friends and relations. And because he lodged in the house of the Vasari where I lived, a little child of eight years old, I remember this good old man, who was always gracious and refined. . . . The picture placed in its right place, he returned to Cortona, accompanied a great part of the way by many citizens and friends and relations, as was his due, who lived always honoured more as a lord and a gentleman, than as a painter.'

Great therefore was the admiration for the man personally apart from his artistic talent, and he being so full of dignity, of bounty, of rectitude, we may certainly imagine that in the affair of the eighty julios Michael Angelo's loss occurred through dishonesty or carelessness of the messenger, rather than from any fault of Signorelli.

At the same time, it must be remembered that the artists of those days despaired of receiving their dues not only from their equals but also from officials, from Princes, from Governors, from Popes. Above all we should remember that Michael Angelo owed a debt far more important than the eighty julios to the old Painter of Cortona!

For even if more powerfully vast and complex is the Last Judgment of Michael Angelo, greater courage was required by the Painter of Cortona to detach himself from the composed correctness of the fifteenth century, and to attack those problems of art, some of which he himself resolved, and some he transmitted to the genius of Caprese.

For myself, I find it hard to say which of the two awe-

THE COCK AND THE HEN: DETAIL FROM THE FRESCO BY LO SPAGNA AT SAN GIACOMO, NEAR SPOLETO
(*Photo. Tilli*)

THE MIRACLE OF THE INNOCENT VICTIM; FROM THE FRESCO BY LO SPAGNA, AT SAN GIACOMO, NEAR SPOLETO

(Phot. Alinari)

inspiring works awakes in my soul the deeper admiration. We do not reach the earlier one from the superb colonnade of Bernini, passing the fluttering iris of the fountains, and the Scala Regia; it is not in the midst of Rome populous and clamorous, but in an older building situated on a dark rock, steep and solitary, which seems to give birth to the puissant subject treated by Luca di Cortona. I know indeed that I feel more emotion when gazing on that of Orvieto, partly from the wondrous beauty of the place, and in some measure realizing what effect on the painter must have been the spirit from the Etruscan tombs of the ancient dead, a memory of that of Jehosaphat, and again from the vases on which their destiny is depicted.

Certain it is that the craftsmen of the Cathedral felt this mysterious craving and influence of those who have gone before, translating it into marble: equally certain is it that Luca Signorelli felt it expressing it in his vigorous frescoes.

The imagination of man is not sufficient for these profound ultramundane conceptions; we need the great sensations which the mystery of death bestows, the poetry of the past, the pain of the present; which hope and despair, dreams and reality, make manifest.

Thus the prophetic voice of Daniel issues from the depths of the mountain of Orvieto, even before the summons from the storied walls of its temple: 'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.'

VIII. VOWS AND HALTERS

VOWS AND HALTERS

IN the 'Story' of St. Nicholas of Tolentino we read of two brothers, Mizolo and Vanni, who were captured while travelling from Osimo to Aquila, and accused of having committed a murder. Taken before the Governor of the city they protested their innocence, but after being cruelly tortured, they declared themselves guilty in order to escape further pain, and they were condemned to the gallows. The two wretched men turned their thoughts and their prayers to St. Nicholas. Vanni was hanged at once; but four days afterwards when Mizolo was led by the executioners towards the same fate, they found the former still alive! Astounded at the miracle, they cut down the victim and allowed both him and his brother to go free.

We see the story depicted in various ways: sometimes St. Nicholas is supporting Vanni on the gallows, sometimes the hangmen are dragging his brother there, only to find Vanni living!

Amongst the thirteenth-century pictures in the Chapel of San Nicola at Tolentino, there is one showing the saint holding the victim by his elbow on the one side and under his arm on the other.

This same idea is shown in a small panel-picture in the Raccolta Spiridon by a Florentine artist of the sixteenth century, the scene taking place between two groups of soldiers, and near a walled city.

The second phase of the story is represented in the

seventeenth century by Giorgio Alberini, a pupil of Montecalvo, in one of the lunettes of the little cloister of Santa Croce at Casal Montferrato; it was removed some years ago from the wall and is now in the municipal gallery.

The gallows from which Vanni is hanging rises on a hill in view of the city. Below is the overturned ladder, and he gazes piteously at his brother, who is thrust forward by two soldiers. St. Nicholas appears amongst the clouds on high.

The paintings of Tolentino and Casale are part of the cycle of the miracles of St. Nicholas, and thus have to do exclusively with the story of the saint; but the small picture described may well have been votive.

This conjecture has indeed some foundation in fact. It is known, for instance, what gave rise to the painting of a certain picture by 'Maestro Ercolese dipintore' (perhaps Ercoli Banci); according to the story of Cherubino Ghirardacci in his *History of Bologna* in 1505, which I give in his own picturesque words:

'It has happened in these days, that is to say on April 15, Tuesday, that two thieves have been hanged; one sixty years old and one about eighteen, and the execution took place on the usual spot, that is in the cattle market; and the minister of justice ordered that they should be left hanging upon the gallows until the usual hour, when the members of the Company of the Dead came to remove them for burial, and having taken down from the gibbet the old man and having placed him on the bier, they then deposed

the youth, called Pietro Antonio of Bologna. He had been adopted by one who dwelt in the Borgo of San Pietro, and was already a novice of San Jacomo; this one was found alive and of so much vivacity it seemed as though he had been reposing on his bed asleep: but however with the neck injured, because the halter had entered into it, and had almost sawn through the throat.

The bystanders, marvelling much at this unusual sight, quickly had him carried to the Hospital to care for him; and there came a messenger from the Senate to see, and to hear everything that had happened; and Pietro Antonio said that he had been helped by the glorious saint Nicholas of Tolentino, to whom he had vowed, that if he escaped this opprobrious death, he would vest himself in his habit, and that he being on the gallows, the glorious St. Nicholas supported him by holding the soles of his feet in his hands. This was considered a marvellous miracle in the city, and every one ran to visit him and hear him discourse.

'On Sunday, April 27, the Brothers of San Jacomo came in procession to the Hospital to fetch the above-mentioned Pietro Antonio and to conduct him to San Jacomo, and they pass together with the "Compagnia della Morte" behind San Petronio and before this church, and they go before the palace of the family Antiani, and below the "Madonna del Popolo"; and the condemned man is dressed in white with a black mantle, and with no cap on his head, and with the same halter round his neck with which he was hanged. When he reaches this spot, he falls on his

knees and adores the Queen of Heaven, and wishing to rise, the simple women around tear off some of his clothes in devotional excitement; but being covered with another cape, he arrives at the church of San Jacopo, and there in the presence of all the city, the halter is taken from his neck and laid by him on the altar; and by the reverend prior of that said convent, Master Giovanni de Ripis, he was solemnly dressed in the Carmelite habit and called Brother Nicholas, in honour and reverence of St. Nicholas of Tolentino; and the ceremonies of vesting him being over, the friars meanwhile chanting the Te Deum Laudamus, he was presented by the said Prior to the very holy image of the glorious St. Nicholas, which is behind the choir in the chapel of St. Thomas Apostle and St. Nicholas, now called of the Madonna of Heaven, because when he made his vow he had in his mind this venerated image. Then he placed there his votive offering, his true portrait painted on canvas, and also the same halter with which he was hanged, the which things one may still see to-day in this said church.

'He lived four years very devoutly, tending the sick; but then, tempted by the devil, he threw away his habit, and giving himself once more to thieving he was taken and hanged with the golden halter to the long balcony of the Podestà, and died for his sins.

'The record of this miracle appears, with all the expenses, in an authentic book of 148 pages, in the Sacristy of these said monks, where are mentioned the sums spent on the

THE MIRACLE OF THE INNOCENT VICTIM: FROM THE FRESCO BY PIER ANTONIO MESASTRIS, IN THE CHURCH OF THE PELLEGRINI, ASSISI
(*Photo. Alinari*)

MADONNA AND SAINTS: FROM THE PAINTING BY LO SPAGNA IN THE PICTURE GALLERY AT SPOLETO
(*Photo. Alinari*)

procession, and miracle, and of the votive panel picture, which was made by master Ercolese, painter, and cost in all lire 3 and soldi 11.'

So the rogue reached the end that he deserved, even for his first crime; but it is certain that the 'miracle' of 1505 must have raised an outcry and admiration in many parts of Italy, and above all, in the pious provinces of Umbria and the Marches, where the cult of St. Nicholas of Tolentino was specially widespread and keen.

Professor Robert Schiff of Pisa possesses a panel-picture of the School of Perugino, in which one sees the saint upholding two victims, one fully grown, one young, his hands under their feet. Four figures, clothed in the usual Peruginesque costumes, stand at the sides of the tragic central group and in front of a beautiful view of woods and mountains.

Is it possible that this picture bears allusion to the story narrated by Ghirardacci? Though true that St. Nicholas supported only the youth, and left the old man to his fate, it is possible that the story passing by word of mouth became embellished, and popular devotion could not tolerate that the venerated saint should not save both victims.

That some of such pictures are votive is proved by the fact that besides not being in churches or chapels dedicated to St. Nicholas of Tolentino, or (as we shall see) to St. James, one sometimes finds the other saints supporting the hanged man; saints in whose legends such a miracle is not recorded but who were particularly honoured by

such persons who had been in danger of strangulation. In fact, it is thus that the canvas of Ercolese at Bologna is votive. And also at Bologna in the Museum of Santo Stefano, a picture is preserved (of early fourteenth century work, or possibly earlier) in which the figure on the gibbet is upheld by St. Anthony, Abbot; and in the Museum of the Louvre there is a little story-picture where St. Jerome in Cardinal's robes supports two victims, this has been attributed to Pesellini, but is of a later date and of the Umbro-Tuscan School. Even St. Catherine is occasionally invoked in similar cases. In the fifteenth century at Fierbois, a chapel existed dedicated to her as patron of prisoners. Amongst the devout, who go to attest their fervour, we find honourable people, as well as beggars and rascals. In any case, nearly all have left their testimony of mercies received in a book kept for the purpose. This book, published by Abbé Bourané, contains the wonderful story of a Scotsman called Michael Hamilton.

In his own country he had had a special veneration for St. Catherine; therefore to her he had recourse when he was captured as a thief, and taken to the gallows.

During the night, the priest of the place heard a voice telling him to cut the cord, but he did not hurry to obey the mysterious message. The following day, however, after the Pascal Mass, he sent his servant, who in his turn did not hasten to the place of execution. The servant wounded the unfortunate man in his foot, and he, moving,

revealed the fact that he was still alive; and so he was freed from the halter and given into the care of a nun.

Returning to the pictures already described, we are bound to admit that some are really 'ex voto' ordered by friends or relations hoping for the escape from death of a condemned man, still in prison; or else the picture may be painted for one who may have had the cord round his neck, and his legs for a moment in the air, and who wishes thus to have a perennial remembrance of mercies received.

The fate of these unhappy wretches is also confided to St. Dominic of Calzada; but above all, even before St. Nicholas of Tolentino, to St. James of Compostella, that is to say St. James the Apostle.

Where nowadays, in view of the beautiful Sierra de Gredos in Spain, Calzada de Oropeso rises amid fertile cornfields, long ago there was but a 'forest, savage, rough and stern', a nest of brigands who assaulted the pilgrims on their way to the Sanctuary of St. James of Compostella (Campus stellæ). About the middle of the twelfth century, a poor man called Dominic, after having knocked in vain at the door of many convents only to be sent away on account of his wretched clothes and miserable condition, decided to make himself a reed hut near this forest, and soon afterwards he built a little chapel in honour of the Madonna. Then he set to work to level the earth, and to cut boughs and branches so as to make a good road for pilgrims in that fearsome and dangerous solitude, which was called

'Calzada' because it was supported by ramparts and paving. Thus rendered safe, the place gradually became populated and after the death of Dominic in 1199 the little town was made a bishopric, which was later transferred to Calahorra.

Now we are told that this miracle took place there. A French family, consisting of father, mother and young son, on their way to St. James of Compostella, stopped to rest in an inn at Calzada. The daughter of the hostess fell suddenly in love with the young man, and found a way of letting him know of her momentary passion, making him audacious proposals, which he indignantly refused. The ardent Spaniard then, thinking to revenge herself, hid a silver cup in the cowl of the youth, and afterwards accused him of theft and had him arrested.

The story is clearly founded on that of Joseph and Potiphar's wife; there is also the false accusation of a stolen cup.

However, the young man was brought before the Judge and by him condemned to death, and was then hanged. The parents, in absolute desperation, continued their pilgrimage.

But their son being innocent, St. Dominic of Calzada supported him, invisible to all except himself, and when the parents returned to that place, they found him still alive on the gallows, and heard the reason of the marvel from his own lips. They therefore went to the Judge, in their humble garb of pilgrims, and brought before him while he was dining, they begged mercy for their son.

'But he has been hanged and has been dead for several days,' said the Judge.

The parents declared that he was alive, the Judge, still incredulous, added in a tone of derision:

'He is alive as the roast cock and hen that you see on this dish!'

The sentence was hardly uttered, when cock and hen sprang up alive and gay and began to crow!

It is hardly necessary to say that the youth was taken down, and with the halter round his neck, was conducted by all with pious excitement for the rest of his journey.

For this miracle St. Dominic of Calzada was represented in popular art with a cock and hen on his shoulders, the pilgrim's staff in his left hand and the halter in his right. He is also to be seen in this manner on a leaden plaque found in the Seine in 1860, which must have been lost by some pilgrim.

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In France and Italy, this same miracle is by preference attributed to St. James, the saint for whom the pilgrimage was undertaken, and the legend undergoes variations; here is one example: in 1090 some German pilgrims, actually on their way to Compostella, arriving at Toulouse, stopped in an inn. The host, after having made them drunk, hid a silver cup in their baggage. Next day, when they had already started, he ran after them, recalling them and accusing them of theft. Surprised and distressed, they asked for full investigation, but the cup was found

in a box belonging to father and son together. The Judge before whom these presumed thieves were taken, condemned one only to be executed. Then arose a generous and distressing dispute between the two, each wishing to save the other. At last, the son was hanged, and the father in misery continued his pilgrimage. After thirty-six days he returned to the place of execution, to weep and pray at the tomb of his son, but he found him still hanging with the rope, and heard him say: 'Rejoice, instead of sorrowing, father, because I have never been so happy as I am at present. St. James has sustained me with his hand, and comforted me with his celestial sweetness.' The father ran to the city and proclaimed what had happened; the people flocked to the young victim, took him down from the gallows safe and sound, and put in his place the perfidious host.

This story is less attractive than the last one. There is wanting in this one the maiden overcome by passion and denial, from whence come deceit and calumny, and above all there is wanting the pleasant incident of the cock and hen, to which artists were specially attracted.

In the church of St. George at Schlettstad (on the Rhine) there are four episodes of the legend to be seen, executed in the fifteenth century; and in the church of Semur in Burgundy, there is a bas-relief. But in France, the story is by preference treated in stained-glass: for example in one window of 1554 in the church of Triel (Seine-et-Oise), again in a church of Saint Pierre de Roye (Somme),

in Saint Vincent at Rouen, and finally in a window of the Abbey of Fontévrault now in the Vendôme Library. In only one stained-glass window in Italy do we find the story of the youth on the gallows, and that is in San Domenico in Perugia, it is attributed to Bartolomeo di Pietro in 1411, and shows French influence.

The other representations in painting and sculpture come later. However, the same miracle modelled in paste is to be found in the sacristy of the Cathedral at Atri,—there are three compartments: the first showing the scene of the execution; the second, the marvel of the risen cock and hen; and the third, the youth hanging but still alive.

Again in the fifteenth century the same subject is frescoed in the church of Cuna (province of Siena) very badly freed from whitewash. In this connection, it may be well to mention here, that thousands of old frescoes were covered with whitewash in olden times for hygienic reasons, during or directly after a severe pestilence, especially that of 1630; it was not done, as so many think, in disparagement of an art gone out of fashion.

The Cuna fresco is in two divisions, in one is the miracle of the cock and hen, in the other the Judge goes with the pilgrims to the place of torture, and finds the youth still alive, without seeing that the saint is upholding him. The fresco is unfortunately ruined, but what remains is sufficient to show that the costumes, especially of the pilgrims, are reproduced with accuracy.

Of the same date and in the Umbro-Marchigiano

style, is the picture in the Vatican gallery; the father and mother kneeling before a young King, crowned, and sitting at table with other figures; then with the parents gazing at the gallows from which hangs their son, sustained by St. James, who here is seen amongst the clouds.

These two scenes are gracefully depicted by Pier Antonio Mesastris in a lunette of the church of the Pellegrini in Assisi. The Judge, with cap, and cape of miniver, is sitting at a richly served table. Near him are two elegant youths, while the parents are standing in front beseeching the surprised judge to go and see the miracle with his own eyes. In the meantime the cock and hen get up in the dish, well covered with feathers! Pages and cavaliers are around, nor is the little monkey missing. In the other scene the parents, still amongst cavaliers, are near their wretched son, whose feet are held by St. James in his left hand. Far away in a mountainous background, rises a walled city with towers and a wide river spanned by a bridge.

The lunette, portraying the same subject in the church of San Biagio in Forlì by Marco Palmezzani on a cartoon of Melozzo, has quite a different artistic value. And if the pictorial execution passing from master to scholar has become hesitating and hard, the composition is still of a surprising variety and beauty. Indeed, the scene with its spacious architecture, the table almost in the middle and the figures in two planes, those in the lower one to the right kneeling, those to the left upright, seems to

MADONNA AND SAINTS: FROM THE PAINTING BY FRANCESCO MELANZIO IN THE CHURCH OF SANTA ILLUMINATA AT MONTEFALCO (*Photo. Alinari*)

SANTA MARIA DEL POPOLO: FROM THE TEMPERA IN THE STYLE OF MELOZZO IN SAN FRANCESCO OF MONTEFALCO
(*Photo. Min. Istruzione*)

anticipate and prepare the composition of that miracle of painting: Raffael's 'Miracle of Bolsena'.

Surely there must have been some historical reason for representing the miracle of Calzada in San Biagio in Forlì.

The date is between 1492 and 1493. Let us consider what actually happened in Forlì in December, 1491.

The conspiracy that deprived Catarina Sforza of her husband Girolamo Riario, the frightful fury of her revenge, the facile comfort that she found in her secret marriage with Giacomo Feo, are all well-known facts; equally manifest is the desire of the Forlivesi to free themselves from her tyranny and that of her new husband, a yoke so grievous that they embarked on a fresh plot, which was, however, soon discovered. Some of the conspirators were slain, some thrown into prison, some condemned to the gallows. Amongst these last were Giovanni Salombrini and Giovanni Montanari. They were taken with the halter round their necks to the balcony of the Palazzo Pubblico, but while in the act of being executed, the innocence of Montanari was recognized, he having indeed tried to dissuade his companion from the perilous plot. Cobelli writes: 'Zohanne Salombrino went to the gallows, and Zohanne Montanari to the citadel with the halter round his neck that all Forlì could see him.' And the chronicler Andrea Bernardi, called the Novacula, tells us, 'Zohanne Salombrino was hanged. The other Zohanne had the grace of life, and returned to the citadel with the halter round his neck', then was liberated 'because he had not transgressed'.

Did Giacomo Feo help to obtain this pardon? Was it he who realized the innocence of Montanari? If so, one can see the connection between his name and that of the saint, to whom the Italian version of the legend assigns the miracle! With time this subject ceases to be treated artistically, but already the anecdotal and narrative picture is rare.

However, in addition to the fresco of Alberini already mentioned, we find in the church of San Giorgio at Varzo, near Domodossola, a lunette of the sixteenth century, depicting the same scene, and in the museum at Udine a panel-picture of a later date, a feeble work by a follower of Andrea Schiavone, showing the usual execution in the distance, and the parents hastening to the Judge, who in this case is a Doge, with his Venetian Cap, and seated beside him at the table, is the Dogaressa.

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Of the fourteen representations in Italy of the above-mentioned miracle, half that number are by Umbrian artists, and the most important of these is in the heart of the province, the Castle of San Giacomo, five miles from Spoleto. The artist is Giovanni di Pietro, called Lo Spagna, from the country of his birth; he has left two fine frescoes in the apse of the Castle chapel, recording the miracle of the titular saint of the place. In the first of these, the father and mother, as pilgrims, are humble and supplicating, while the attitude of the judge is full of frank surprise. He is seated in a great chair, before a

table where the cock and hen spring proudly erect; around are grouped soldiers plainly incredulous. In the neighbouring fresco, the parents are near the gibbet, where their son is supported by St. James; the landscape is an open plain, wooded and solitary.

The work is rich in dignity and colour, and pure in the simplicity of composition; broadly painted, particularly in the single figures. It was painted in the last years of the artist's life, between 1526 and 1527, when without breaking faith with the teaching of Perugino, he felt himself attracted to the sure and ample forms of Raffael, whose fellow-student he had been, also helping him in some works in Città della Pieve. Cavalcaselle pronounces him after Raffael, the most important figure of this school. Vasari says his colouring was the best of Perugino's pupils. And we must add that as the colour of Perugino languished, so that of Lo Spagna improved, who from grey tints not very transparent, reached others warm and pleasing, even if more morbid than vigorous. Like Perugino, he had little imagination, but he did not possess his master's lofty ideality of form, nor had he the vivacious decorative spirit of Pintoricchio. Incapable of making original and personal works, he never attempted great flights, but painted always with diligence and love, laborious and prompt, putting into his art the same probity that he showed in his life. He was given the citizenship of Spoleto in 1516, and the next year was elected Captain of the Confraternity of St. Luke. He loved Spoleto as his own land and enriched it

with his works and even if he went away, it was only attracted by the dream of Rome.

But Rome, though a city full of allurement, crushed and frightened him. And he returned to the serenity of Umbria.

IX. THE MADONNA DEL POPOLO DI MONTEFALCO

THE MADONNA DEL POPOLO DI MONTEFALCO

AMONGST the Byzantine pictures of the Madonna, one of the most celebrated is the one in Sta. Maria del Popolo in Rome; it is said to be painted by St. Luke and to have been saved from a Saracenic invasion in Byzantium; it was transferred from the Lateran to its present position by Gregory IX in 1235.

The Virgin is holding the Child on her left arm, while the right one is raised in admiration.

Her head is slightly bent and covered with a blue and gold mantle; her nose is thin and long, her mouth small and round, her eyes very large and with an expression of astonishment. Jesus is completely clothed. He wears a brown tunic girdled, above a little shirt which is tied at the neck, and over all a red mantle, with straight lines in gold, imitating mosaic. His left hand is resting with tenderness on that of His mother; the right is raised in benediction.

It is a matter of great difficulty to examine this picture and the one in Sta. Maria Maggiore. Placed very high, over the altars and behind ornaments and doors and glasses, it is even difficult to approach, much more so to inspect them, although there is not the trouble that existed some years ago in obtaining permission. It is but rarely and only for solemn occasions that the pictures are uncovered, or carried in procession.

How is it, then, that so many copies exist of the picture

of Sta. Maria del Popolo, when we know of the great difficulties of access?

The fact is this: nearly all the copies are indirect; that is to say are copies of copies, sometimes of the third or fourth hand.

The rare replicas from the original were made by special concession to important personages; for example to Alessandro Sforza of Pesaro in 1470 and to Christina of Sweden in 1655, and it is probably this latter that is still kept in Sta. Maria del Popolo and is shown to those who wish to photograph and recopy it!

There are antique reproductions of this Madonna (I know one at Bari, two at Orvieto, one at Ravenna, Bologna, Siena, etc.) which maintain to a great extent the Byzantine characteristics because the date at which they were painted was nearer to the original. But in later days, when we reach the Renaissance and pass beyond it, the copies by their technicalities reveal in various ways the masters of the schools which executed them.

The sixteenth-century copy of Sta. Maria del Popolo is painted in oils on rough canvas, with quick brush-work, and like all pictures of that day, has lost its colour. The mosaic-like stripes on the dress of the Child are actually unnatural. In Florence, and in San Francesco d'Amelia there are two Umbrian copies with characteristics of the Peruginesque School. The former is attributed to Pintoricchio and, to my mind, is from a copy made by him; for we must remember that he worked for several years in

Sta. Maria del Popolo (1488–1491 and 1508–1509) and was under the orders of eminent men, such as Cardinal della Rovere, several Bishops and finally of Julius II. It is almost certain that during these years, Pintoricchio must have made a copy of this famous Madonna; but more interesting is emphatically the copy to be seen now in the church of San Francesco in Montefalco.

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I have passed two hours in the cool half light of the quiet church, thus avoiding the brilliant summer sun which blazes over the hills and vales of Umbria.

I have walked round the lonely walls of Montefalco and have seen the hallowed summits of Monteluco and of Subasio, and the cities on the hills in a sheen of dazzling light.

I have heard the noontide bells from far and near; they reach me as a murmur from Monte Pennino.

The church of San Francesco, although no longer used for religious services, is full of a sacred atmosphere from the frescoes still remaining there. Benozzo has painted the apse in a pleasant narrative manner rich in details, but reminding us once more of his inferiority to his master Fra Angelico. There are also works by Perugino and by some of his pupils; two of whom, Melanzio and Fra Agnolo, were natives of Montefalco. These are pleasing though feeble painters, and in the peace of the old church they also murmur a prayer of gentleness.

At last I see the copy of the 'Madonna del Popolo',

hanging on a pillar at the end of the nave: I have it taken down that I may examine it more closely.

It is in 'weak tempera', that is to say so weak as to be transparent, like a water-colour, through using colours much diluted on a very fine canvas called 'renso', a certain stuff made only in Reims.

The few artists who work in this way, wishing to avoid the running of the liquid colour on the fine lawn, prepare the canvas with a thin paste of isinglass, which leaves a delicate sheen almost like silk. In an old recipe of the time we read: 'Take the bones of a pike and of any other large fish, and dry them; then pound them in a mortar of bronze, and then put this said powder into a new pipkin, with so much water as you think sufficient, and boil it all until it is well liquefied . . . Then lift it from the fire, strain it through a linen cloth, and let it become cold'.

I do not believe that this species of water-colour is older than the middle of the fifteenth century, nor do I think it lasted for more than fifty years, and it was not used in many districts. It is essentially from Venetia and Emilia, and the best example remaining is that of 'The Dead Christ', painted by Mantegna between 1457 and 1459, now in the Brera. Francesco del Cossa and Lorenzo Costa made use of this medium in Bologna, and many of the Romagna painters between Faenza and Forlì used it, for example Leonardo Scaletti, in his picture of 'Galeotto Manfredi kneeling before San Bernardino', which is in the Faenza

Gallery. There too is a Pietà, in this same method, said to be by Melozzo da Forlì. Possibly these two were used as standards, for which the lightness of the canvas would be suitable, but this weak tempera was not exclusively used for standards, nor were they all painted in this manner. Many more are painted in strong tempera, and in later years in oils, as those in Umbria. Sometimes oils were used also on 'renso', but then it was gummed on to a wood panel.

The technique of the Montefalco picture is the same as those at Faenza; this would not be sufficient argument to stamp it 'romagnolo' were it not that its character is borne out by other signs.

The Virgin is the type that Melozzo usually painted, and which was followed by his pupils: a long oval face, fine high eyebrows, straight nose, relatively narrow at the base where there is a slight curve; the arched upper lip much wider than the under one, but less bowed.

To recognize the clear-cut style of tracing the essential lines, and the affinity of that face with the type of Melozzo and his followers, one must be accustomed to study the painters of Romagna of the second half of the fourteenth century.

Now let us see whether there exists a reproduction of the Madonna del Popolo, which may have served as a model for these later copies.

Alessandro Sforza, Lord of Pesaro, ordered Antonazzo, a Roman, to make him a copy of the Byzantine Madonna

in Sta. Maria Maggiore and the following epigram was written for this work:

Ad Mariam Maiorem. Virginis est Romae quam Lucas pinxit imago tam sancta: errorem quis putet esse suam hanc? Antonatius pictor romanus ab illa duxit. Alexander Sfortia solvit opus.

(To St. Mary Major. There is in Rome a very holy picture of the Virgin painted by Luke, who could ever err in maintaining that it is really by him? Antonazzo of Rome copied it. Alexander Sforza paid for the work.)

But this same Sforza had also a copy of the Madonna del Popolo made for him by Melozzo da Forlì; and for this latter a more elegant epigram was composed:

Ad Mariam de Populo. Hanc divus Lucas vivo de Verginis ore pinxerat: haec propria est Virginis effigies. Sfortia Alexander iussit, Melotius ipsam effinxit Lucas diceret esse suam.

(To St. Mary of the People. St. Luke had taken an original portrait of the Virgin. This is a sure effigy of the Virgin. Alexander Sforza ordered it: Melozzo copied it. Luke would say that it is his.)

It is sometimes believed that such copies were executed in 1461, when Sforza was passing through Rome, after having fought with Piccenino at San Fabiano, but Constantino Corvisieri and Okkonen both consider this uncertain, and I myself feel convinced that the picture is of an earlier date than either Melozzo or Antonazzo.

The name of the latter appears for the first time three

years later on a picture in Rieti, and the first positive news of Melozzo in Rome is a considerable time afterwards. And inasmuch as Alessandro Sforza had more connection with Rome when Paul II made him General of the Pontifical Troops in 1469, I believe that it was in that year, or the succeeding one, that he had these copies painted. There is therefore no doubt that Melozzo da Forlì copied the Madonna del Popolo, and I feel equally certain that the one in Montefalco belongs to the group of his school, and that judging by the grand simplicity of line, it is probably of the last part of the fifteenth century. Perhaps some one may find the name of the master, when they see the infinite charm of the picture and the lofty pure beauty of the Madonna, but speaking for myself, I cannot venture!

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